



INDIA'S MAULANA

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Centenary Volume I  
TRIBUTES AND APPRAISALS







Portrait by K.K. Hebbar in the Central Hall of Parliament, New Delhi.

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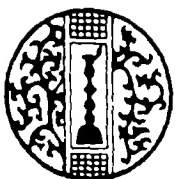


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# INDIA'S MAULANA



EDITED BY  
SYEDA SAIYIDAIN HAMEED



INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS  
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*India's Maulana*

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The frontispiece is based on a portrait of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad by K.K. Hebbar.

At the end, I wish to remember my late husband Dr. S.M.A. Hameed who gave me every moral support needed to undertake such a massive project, and my father, the late Dr. K.G. Saiyidain for creating interest and veneration in my heart for Maulana Sahib, very early in my life. Three decades later, I was able to draw upon that feeling for giving my best to this prestigious project.

— Editor

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## Message

It is appropriate that a collection of Tributes and Appraisals is being brought out on the occasion of Maulana Azad's birth centenary, together with anthologies in Urdu, Hindi and English, of his speeches and writings. I am sure these will serve to quicken interest in the seminal movement for our emancipation that was witnessed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Many a great person was enlisted in the freedom struggle under Gandhiji's leadership. Each brought his or her own valuable personality and talent to the cause. If one brought organising ability, another brought intellectual sharpness and yet another a sincerity of dedication. But Maulana Sahib brought with him a rare *combination* of head and heart, an inspiration that was at once intellectual and emotional and a dedication that proceeded simultaneously from the signals of the mind as well as the promptings of conscience.

Maulana Sahib believed sincerely in India's destiny—not just as a nation but as a civilization. His knowledge of history gave him perspective. His knowledge of scripture gave him wisdom. To perspective and wisdom was added a sense of purpose. The combination was formidable. It was also creative.

Even as a young boy, he was unusually studious and while still in his teens he established a name for himself as the writer of erudite articles in Urdu. By the time he was sixteen, the future Maulana had already completed the traditional course of higher Islamic education.

Faith in God and pride in his country served as turbines in the young Maulana's sensibility to generate a fervent patriotism. Civil disobedience and the methods of resistance through boycott began to appeal to him. To rouse the conscience of his own Islamic brethren, he started in 1912 the great weekly *Al-Hilal*. The short-sighted disagreed with his pan-Indian nationalism. But the far-sighted rallied to his call.

*Al-Hilal* carried two messages simultaneously: the message of Islam and of Indian Independence. In describing patriotism for the Muslims as a religious duty, Maulana Sahib echoed the immortal Sanskrit saying:

*Janani Janma Bhumisha  
Swargadapi Gareeyasi*

(Mother and Motherland are  
Superior to Heaven.)

Maulana Sahib's courage no less than his erudition was noticed and admired by the nation, transcending all denominations. His distinguished contemporary Acharya Kripalani summed up Maulana Sahib's role in the following words:

He was a great divine and if he had just confined himself to the spiritual heritage of his people, he would have been the first in the field. He was a great orator and if he had simply remained an orator, the nation would have remembered him among the country's great orators. He was a great scholar and if he had devoted his life to scholarship, he would have been a leader in that field.... but his merit lay in this that he thought that all scholarship, all knowledge of divinity and philosophy, all his historical knowledge, would be worth little if the country was not free.

And so Maulana Sahib placed his talents and his time at the disposal of the freedom movement. But his vision went beyond the attainment of freedom. He was able to see that freedom will come, sooner or later, but that it must be followed by a consolidation of the spirit of the freedom movement. He knew in the core of his being that freedom would avail little, if it did not lead to unity among our people. Maulana Sahib once said:

If you like God you have to revile evil and if you want to please God you must not be afraid of displeasing Satan.

The 'good' that Maulana Azad had in mind for India consisted of her great legacy of a composite culture and her future destiny as a modern and progressive nation. The 'evil' that Maulana Sahib saw was the disharmony between the main communities of India.

The innumerable incarcerations, harassment and restrictive orders only served to enhance Maulana Sahib's national stature and standing with the people.

With his uncanny gift of spotting true worth, Gandhiji saw in Maulana Azad an extraordinary asset to the cause. And, on his part Maulana Sahib saw in Gandhiji, the great answer to the challenge of the times. Once he joined the Mahatma, there was no looking back. Initiative after initiative, campaign after campaign, saw the Mahatma and the Maulana side by side. Theirs was a great meeting, a great *sangam* of the force of the Ganges and the sweep of the Indus, the depth of the Gita and the vigour of the Koran.

When the mantle of Congress Presidentship fell on Maulana Sahib's young shoulders—he was just about 35 years old then—it was a recognition of the confidence that he enjoyed from all sections of Indian society. Our pluralist society saw him as an authentic voice of India's composite wisdom, of its heritage of eclecticism and its mutual respect for the religious practices and faiths of others.

Maulana Sahib as President of the Indian National Congress was the symbol of national resurgence. He was Congress President during the crucial phase of the War and during the Quit India Movement.

Gandhiji was arrested after the historic Quit India resolution and taken to Poona; Maulana Sahib, the Congress President, and the entire Working Committee were arrested and confined in Ahmednagar Fort. There, in the darkness of his cell, the fire of his revolutionary ardour yielded place to the lamp of his scholarship. Maulana Sahib read and wrote prodigiously during that term of imprisonment. Jawaharlalji, his fellow prisoner, had then embarked upon the manuscript of that great literary accomplishment, the *Discovery of India*. Jawaharlalji consulted Maulana Saheb extensively on that exercise, especially on the portions of his work dealing with Mughal history.

In the meantime, Maulana Sahib's wife, Begum Zuleikha, fell grievously ill. One day, his jail superintendent handed Maulana Sahib a telegram. It informed him that his life-partner had passed away. "Though my determination did not desert me", he has written, "it seemed as if my feet had no strength left in them." Maulana Sahib remained in jail for one more year thereafter. On his release and return to Calcutta, he was received by vast crowds. His car inched forward along roads lined by his admirers. Maulana Sahib records:

As the car was crossing Howrah bridge, my mind moved back... My wife had come up to the gate of my house to bid me farewell. I was now returning after three years but she was in her grave and my home was empty. I told my companions to turn the car, for I wished to visit her grave before I went home. My car was full of garlands. I took one and placed it on her grave and silently read the *Fatiha*.



That passage ranks with the eloquent musings of Shah Jahan and the poetry of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Maulana Sahib was an outspoken opponent of the political philosophy of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and of Partition and was a champion of the cause of Hindu Muslim unity and co-existence in a secular India. Maulana Sahib regarded the Partition of India as a defeat and would have preferred the postponement of the Independence of the country. He said as much at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee on 14-6-1947 which voted in favour of Partition. He said if this political defeat had to be accepted, "We should at the ~~same time try to ensure~~ that our culture was not divided". Azad, like Gandhi, could never reconcile himself to the division of the country and yet after Independence, ~~he did not condemn either Jinnah or his own colleagues but bowed with dignity to the inevitable.~~

What was not to have happened has happened. We have now to think of the future.

Maulana Sahib was by Jawaharlal Nehru's side when the task of governing free India fell on Nehru. Azad became Jawaharlalji's trusted colleague in the formulation and implementation of the new Nation State's progressive policies. Maulana Sahib was entrusted with the portfolio of Education which he held continuously until his death in 1958. His tenure in the Ministry of Education was pioneering in more senses than one. It was in this period that education first came to be viewed as something more than the imparting of book-knowledge. Scientific and technical education, teachers' training, language training, schemes of scholarship for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other Backward Classes—all these took shape in these years. Although Maulana Azad never used the phrase, **it was in his stewardship of the Ministry of Education that the Government of India first came to view education as an investment in human resources.**

~~Maulana Sahib's days in the Ministry of~~ Education are fondly remembered by all those who were privileged to watch it. In this period his intellectual horizons remained vast. He recognised the All India Council of Technical Education and established the University Grants Commission. Along with the other teachers Dr. Radhakrishnan and Jawaharlal Nehru, he gave shape to the concept of our three distinguished Akademis for Music, Literature and Art: the Sahitya Akademi, the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Lalit Kala Akademi. Maulana Sahib wanted resurgent India to find articulation and, by so doing, to fulfil itself.

His early eclectic training made him a powerful votary of international understanding and world peace. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations of which he was founder and first President, bears shining testimony to his world view.

When on February 22, 1958 Maulana Sahib breathed his last, Dr. Radhakrishnan said:

He stood for what one may call the emancipated mind, the mind which is free from narrow prejudices of race or language, province or dialect, religion or caste. We had in Maulana Sahib the civilized mind... There is no doubt that we will not see the like of him again, a great man, a man of stately presence, indomitable courage and fearlessness, that is what Maulana was.

May these Centenary Volumes bring Maulana Sahib's career vividly to life and may they inspire us, as a society, as a nation and as a civilisation to emulate his example.

*April 26, 1989*

  
R. VENKATARAMAN



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## Introduction

Describing Maulana as *Amir-e-Karvan*, Pandit Nehru said that Maulana's death has created a gap that cannot be filled. "He represented a glorious synthesis of cultures, civilizations, thoughts and philosophies which have powerfully influenced India's history. He was a bridge between the old and the new. The intensity of grief will gradually diminish. But what about the loss and the shock the country has sustained? To whom shall we now go for consultation and advice?"

*National Herald*  
24 February, 1958

Mohiuddin Ahmad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the child prodigy, who published his first poetry magazine at the age of ten, his major trail-blazing journal at the age of twenty-four, wrote his religious *magnum opus* before he turned thirty years of age, attained his political zenith at age thirty-two when he was elected President of the Indian National Congress, the youngest president to date. What makes a man an Abul Kalam Azad? What combination of elements is needed to create men whose national stature is crested with an international breadth of vision? No doubt Azad was a genius—his phenomenal memory stored information on all subjects, which through years of hard work and relentless self-discipline, became synthesized into a profound understanding of issues. His writings reflect the various stages of his thinking on all the pertinent issues of the day. This volume of *Tributes and Appraisals* is a comprehensive assessment of the life and works of Abul Kalam Azad.

Following his death on 22 February, 1958, all the Indian newspapers and many foreign dailies carried tributes to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Messages from all over the world flooded the nation and many articles appeared on Maulana's life and achievements. The government announced its intention to publish his complete writings. Several magazines in Urdu, Hindi, and English issued special Azad numbers. During his lifetime Abul Kalam Azad tried to avoid publicity, preferring the quietness of a cloister. Death placed him squarely before the uncompromising glare of public opinion and evaluation.



In addition to the spate of articles in newspapers, journals and magazines, two books were also published during the year following his death, with somewhat similar objectives. The first was *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume*, edited by Humayun Kabir, which would have been presented to Maulana on his 70th birthday. This volume contained evaluations of Maulana's life and work by various individuals who were personal friends and colleagues; some of whom had meticulously studied his writings. The second was a Government of India Publications Division monograph entitled *Maulana Azad*. Its first part consisted of tributes to Maulana gathered from all parts of the world. The second and substantive part contained four articles written by Maulana's close associates, two of whom had worked with him in the Ministry of Education. The fact that several photographs were also included indicates that this may have been intended as a souvenir. Its format, however, is that of a monograph.

To commemorate the centenary year of Maulana's birth, the Government of India decided to publish a set of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Centenary Volumes. This decision was consistent with an announcement made by Jawaharlal Nehru on 24 February, 1958, that a collection of the famous writings and speeches of Maulana Azad, representing his views on various subjects will be published by the Sahitya Akademi.<sup>1</sup> The first volume in the current series, entitled *Tributes and Appraisals*, contains articles on Maulana Azad written by various scholars, colleagues, and personal friends. The second volume entitled *Selected Speeches and Writings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* has an English, Urdu and Hindi version. The four Centenary Volumes will reacquaint a majority of Indians and the entire English knowing world with the writings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

*Tributes and Appraisals* should be read as a companion piece to Second Volume. The reader would prefer to read Maulana's own writings before reading what others have to say about them. The articles included in this volume are based either on the author's personal knowledge of Maulana, or a study of his speeches and writings, or a combination of both. They fall into four categories. The first is entitled "As His Contemporaries Saw Him." It consists of tributes and assessments by his colleagues. The second part "Synchronistic Views", consists of previously published articles by individuals who knew Maulana as a friend and colleague, and some contemporaries who had made an in-depth study of his writings. The third part "Current Memories" consists of five articles specially written for this volume by individuals who were closely associated with Maulana during his lifetime, and who have, today, the advantage of reviewing this association from a distance of thirty years. The fourth part entitled "Critical Evaluations" contains articles by individuals who are specialists in this period of history, and have done exhaustive research on a certain aspect of

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<sup>1</sup> *National Herald*, 24 February, 1958

Azad's work The essence of each of the four clusters of articles will be discussed in this introductory chapter

In the first part, "As His Contemporaries Saw Him", the brief statement by Mahatma Gandhi was the inscription on Mahadev Desai's book *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* Jawaharlal Nehru's article contains the famous address to Parliament, delivered at the first meeting held after Maulana's death This formal tribute is preceded by three excerpts, two of which were written from the Ahmednagar Prison and are candid views of Maulana Azad The rest are the writings of friends and colleagues who made statements extolling the life and achievements of Maulana A single piece of writing becomes distinctive because of the quality of its content and style, such as M Chalapathi Rau's editorial which appeared in *National Herald* on 23 February, 1958

It is difficult to recall any adequate parallel to this prince among patriots, except from the richest periods in history He could have been a contemporary of Erasmus, the greatest humanist of the Renaissance, he could have worked comfortably in the company of Luther, the great leader of the Reformation; he could have matched his wisdom with the astuteness of the cardinal statesmen of Europe in the seventeenth century In twentieth century India, he brought to Islam and to Indian nationalism the spirit of a new renaissance, a new Reformation, and a political wisdom equal to the new needs

The second category of articles, "Synchronistic Views", consists of previously published articles written by individuals who combined personal knowledge of Maulana Azad with a sustained interest in his writings This mixing of friendship and scholarship is a unique combination Shorish Kashmiri, a great admirer of Maulana, whose article opens this section, wrote the original for his weekly magazine *Chattan*, published from Lahore This is its first English translation "The Last Journey", is a description of Maulana's funeral written with a sense of the personal loss Summarizing Maulana's position in history, Shorish makes a candid statement about the imbalance between what he gave to his people and what he got in return.

He suffered most at the hands of his own people, so much so that in his later years he became disappointment personified No one in the subcontinent shared his deeper concerns or his foresight Nature had blessed him with the sensitivity of the orient and the insight of the occident He hailed the people, awakened them, entreated them until, on 22 February, before dawn, he became one with his creator It has been seven years since that date, but it seems he may just turn around and ask,

*Kis haal mein ho, yaaran-i-watan?*  
How are you, Oh my countrymen?

The second article “The Voice of Reason” by Acharya Kripalani is an assessment of Maulana’s rational approach to the mission he had ordained for himself. His greatest strength, says Kripalani, was the sincerity and conviction with which he followed his chosen path.

Fortified by his conviction, he never wavered in his faith or in the leadership of Gandhiji. Of course, like many others, he did not believe in non-violence as a creed, but remained loyal to what had been adopted by the Congress. These convictions stood the test of time. No vicissitude in his own political life or the alignment of forces in the country could change them. No misrepresentation of his motives, no calumny, no insults from inferior persons—for he was a sensitive soul—could deflect him from the path he had chosen for himself.

The third article in this section entitled, “A Resplendent Personality”, by Syed Mahmud, is an account of the multi-dimensional personality of Maulana. It is based on their lifelong association with each other. Several facets of his personality are discussed with appropriate instances from his daily life and dealings with people. For example, Maulana was averse to speaking harshly about anyone, no matter what the provocation. Shortly after partition, a meeting was held at Lucknow which was attended by the Muslims who had derided Maulana during pre-partition days. Mahmud writes:

So, when Maulana came to address the huge concourse, almost everyone expected that he would take the occasion to condemn Mr. Jinnah and tear to pieces the policy which he had pursued resulting in unhappiness to many, but he would not condemn anyone. The very first words that came out of his mouth were, “I have not come here to condemn anyone. What was to have happened, has happened. We have now to think of the future...” If by chance old memories were revived for him, he would simply say with a sigh, “Why expose the scar on one’s own heart. No one is to blame. I alone am to blame. I was so incompetent that I could not succeed in keeping back the Muslims of India from committing deliberate suicide.”

The next article in this section entitled “Philosophy of Education”, is part one of a two-part series by K.G. Saiyidain, in which he discusses Maulana’s philosophy of education. Saiyidain’s thesis is based on an extensive study of Maulana’s writings, particularly his **magnum opus**, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*. As secretary to the Ministry of Education during Maulana’s term of office, Saiyidain was closely associated with

Maulana's educational policies and their implementation. He uses the phrase "humanistic approach" which is the best epithet for Maulana's educational philosophy. Writing about the quality of Maulana's mind which generated this educational philosophy, Saiyidain says

Azad did not care for the typical mind of the 'mulla' or priest, but he had cultivated an infinitely rich and catholic mind which had drawn generously and creatively on many sources, Indian and Islamic, oriental and occidental. While retaining the basic heritage of Islamic values and the creative originality of his mind, he had assimilated the best that ancient Indian religion and philosophy as well as modern Western thought had to offer.

An index at the end of the book completes the volume. It consists of important references to individuals and events. It should be noted that the entries are not the enumeration of the number of times a certain word has been used in the volume, but the significance of the usage.

At the end of this section are two excerpts on Maulana's religion and politics from *Indian Muslims* by Mohammad Mujeeb and *Destiny of Indian Muslims* by Syed Abid Husain. Mujeeb, who started off by taking a sceptic view of Maulana's religion and politics, revised his opinion when he began studying *Tazkirah* for the article he wrote in *A Memorial Volume*. His approach to Maulana has none of the adulation one encounters from time to time in Azad scholars. Strictly objective in his judgement of Maulana, he concludes that although he could not create a following, Maulana revealed an extraordinary side of religion which can, perhaps, be understood and valued by future generations. Abid Husain's analysis of Maulana Azad is in his usual pristine and objective style of writing. His article telescopes the entire life and achievements of Azad concluding that despite the fact that neither the ulemas, nor the so-called liberals, nor the Hindus agreed with him, Maulana had the courage to stick to his convictions, and, from his increasingly lonely position, continued to preach the gospel of truth.

"Current Memories", the third part of this volume, consists of personal recollections based on the authors' memories of conversations, anecdotes and events relating to Maulana's daily life. Aruna Asaf Ali had a long standing family friendship with Maulana, first as Asaf Ali's wife, and after her husband's death in 1953, in her own personal capacity. During the last decade of his life they would often have evening meals together and exchange views on various subjects. Her recollections are of great value to the Azad scholar.

Maulana's basic beliefs had remained unchanged in the years since I first met him in 1930. He always thought of himself as a national leader, and not a leader of the Muslims alone. He believed that the Muslims in India were not on sufferance, and on no account should they feel inferior or apologetic. They must

live in this country on the same terms as Hindus and other citizens holding different religious beliefs, that is, as equals among equals. He never accepted Jinnah's two-nation theory, which, unfortunately, became the battle-cry of the fanatical leaders of Indian Muslims.

The next article in this section is by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. The author describes her reaction to Maulana when she first met him, overawed by his formidable scholarship, until the time when she could freely question him about his personal thoughts and feelings. Kamaladevi cites several examples of the moral strength of the man. The one outstanding gift Maulana possessed was vision. He could look beyond the immediate pale of things. Whenever his advice was not followed, the country suffered.

The lamp of Independence lit on 26th January had dimmed, if not fully extinguished. The flag we had so proudly raised that memorable day was half-mast. For Azad, this was the saddest hour. Reminiscing thoughtfully over the concept of Pakistan he murmured with a slight shudder, "The very term *Pakistan* goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of the world are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories is non-Islamic. Infact the Prophet has said, "God has made the whole world a mosque for me." To my mind this is a symbol of defeatism. As a Muslim, I am not giving up for a moment my right to treat the whole of India as my domain.

Ansar Harvani was a fellow-prisoner with Maulana at the Bankura jail in Bengal. His article is a record of personal recollections gathered from several years of watching Maulana at his various activities. Harvani presents Maulana in different moods, sombre and light, always the perfect gentleman, taking the worst reversals with the utmost dignity, for example, about the partition he writes.

Maulana Azad and his nationalist Muslim followers were heart-broken. The legendary Pathan leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who recently died, wept and exclaimed that he was thrown to the wolves. Maulana Azad's dream of a united India was shattered.

Mohammad Yunus' recollections are culled from the livelier moments of Maulana's daily life. In his article, Maulana seems to step right out of the pages of history doffing the robes of a scholar-savant, to take his turn at fun and repartee. Yunus relates a dozen incidents, each shows Maulana in a different light. For example, Maulana was visited by a certain gentleman with an over-zealous disposition:

Once someone from Lucknow came to visit Maulana. The

guest enquired whether Maulana Sahib had recognized him Maulana replied politely, "*Han mere bhai, main ne achhi tarah pehchan liya hai.*" At this the persistent johnny eagerly enquired, "*Mera naam kya hai?*" Quick came the exasperated retort, "*Aap ka naam hai namakool, Aur ab aap ja sakte hain!*"

This was Maulana's old world decorum combined with a delicate intolerance for fools! Yunus' recounting of several incidents concludes with a personal testimony to Maulana's asceticism The man who could have commanded every material comfort, left behind no prized possessions on which museums and memorials could be built

Thus ended a unique chapter in our history Maulana left no visible assets, no bank account, no other worldly belongings. A car purchased out of a government advance was taken over by his nephew, who paid the balance due from Maulana His wardrobe consisted of a few cotton and woollen achkans, a dozen khadi kurta pyjamas, two pairs of sandals, an old dressing gown, and a worn out hair brush. One could not find two cups of the same type in the pantry. The only thing he had in plenty were books, and an extraordinary intellect was his most valuable possession.

"Excerpts from My Diary" is an account of Krishna Kripalani's journey with Maulana, on board the ship "Cilecia". The article starts with a personal assessment of Maulana which contains a unique comparison between him and Jawaharlal Nehru. "In some respects Maulana Azad had a clearer world view than even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru." The article further relates incidents of Maulana's reluctance to interact with the public. Whenever the ship pulled up at a dock, dignitaries, who had waited hours to meet Maulana, approached Kripalani, who had to turn them away with great personal embarrassment. Attending to his boss was not an easy task; the author has mixed feelings which he records with candour At the same time he has unqualified praise for Maulana's superb intellect and deep human consideration On the subject of the partition, he records an interesting conversation he had with Maulana.

The other day he talked of negotiations leading to partition, and said that he was himself strongly opposed to Mountbatten's suggestion. So was Gandhiji In fact Gandhiji had asked him more than once, "Will you stand by me right to the end?" He had assured him that he would But, said Maulana, Sardar Patel was eager for partition. He was sick of the coalition government during the interim period. Liaquat Ali, as Finance Minister, was putting all sorts of obstacles in his way. Not even a *chaprasi* could be appointed by the Home Minister without the concurrence of the Finance Minister... Maulana was of the view



that the Muslim community as a whole was worse off for the partition. Those who were in Pakistan had made a mess of their state, and those who were in India were no longer in a position to pull their weight. Had there been no partition, the Muslims would not only have had majority governments in Bengal, Punjab, NWFP and Sind, but could have had a considerable voice in the Central Government.

The fourth part of this volume is entitled "Critical Evaluations" The articles that comprise this division were specially written for this volume by historians, philosophers, artists and scientists. The largest number of articles are analyses and assessments of Maulana's concept of religion and politics. B.N. Pande's article "Contribution to Indian Secularism", Kazi Javed's "Secularism within Islamic Context", Malik Ram's "Theological Basis of Politics", Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi's "Religious Ideology and Indian Nationalism", and Syed Vahiduddin's "Religious Philosophy", explore every facet of the subject. The core of their thesis is that given the fact that Maulana was probably the most learned man of his time, especially in matters of religion, he could prove the interrelatedness of religion and politics. Specifically, he saw Islam as possessing all the necessary ingredients for arousing its adherents from the political lethargy which had overtaken the entire race. A vehicle had to be devised for this message to reach Muslims across the length and breadth of India.

*Al-Hilal* became the "trumpet of the archangel" catching the ears of 25,000 readers during the first few months of its publication. In one of the early issues of *Al-Hilal*, when asked by a reader to keep religion separate from politics, Azad replied that Muslims must derive their political thoughts from religion. He then outlined the principles of the Quran which provide the best guidelines for the political course of the Muslims. Then came the verdict:

Any Muslim who takes as his leader in faith or practice any group or teaching other than the Quran is not a Muslim

Azad argues that Muslims are the people of God and have no need to bow before others. They should not trust the government nor follow any other teaching, but rather follow the *Sirat al Mustaqim* (Straight Path). Having established this as a basic tenet, the next step was to show what Islam asks of its followers in the present circumstances.

We have disregarded the lordship of the King of heaven and earth and have taken as our lords the rulers of a few islands of the sea. In the whole day we never once take the name of God in fear and awe, but hundreds of times we tremble and quiver at the very thought of our non-Muslim rulers...Before the day of the Kingdom of God comes, is it not better that we prepare ourselves, lest when His holy day comes, He casts us out,

saying, "You forgot the dominion of God before the dominion of outsiders Depart<sup>1</sup> In the Kingdom of God also you shall be completely forgotten<sup>2</sup>

The five authors mentioned above, refer to various passages from *Al-Hilal* as well as to the later writings of Maulana to illustrate Azad's secularism which had its erudite beginnings in the theological points argued in *Al-Hilal*, and was explicitly stated at the Presidential address at the Khilafat Conference, Agra, 25 October, 1921. Here Azad appealed to the Quran and Sunna to propagate Hindu-Muslim unity. First he quoted from the Quran:

God doth not forbid you to deal with kindness and fairness towards those who have not made war upon you on account of your religion, or driven you forth from your homes, for God loveth those who act with fairness. Only doth God forbid you to make friends of those who, on account of your religion have warred against you, and have driven you forth from your homes (Quran 60 8-9)

Azad makes an important point here. The British are in the second category, therefore the Quranic injunction is not to befriend them. Friendship with the Hindus is permissible because, during the same time-span, they displayed no enmity towards the Muslims.

The best example of cooperation with believers of a different religion is to be found in the concept of *Ummat-e-Vahida* (one nation) used by Prophet Mohammad to oppose the enemies of Islam in Mecca. If the Prophet could do this for a handful of Meccans, Azad asks, should not Indian Muslims join with two hundred and twenty million Hindus in opposing the "Great power in its pride, haughtiness, and blood thirstiness, which is crushing the freedom of all the East." He claims, "For Muslims to do this is an act of religion." Azad's call for Hindu-Muslim unity was issued in connection with Gandhiji's Non-cooperation Movement. For the first time non-cooperation had been presented to the Muslims as based on the Islamic Shara.<sup>3</sup>

Other aspects of Maulana's activities, which are covered by the remaining six articles, are S.M.H. Burney's "Journalistic Career", Mushirul Haq's "A Revolutionary Nationalist", Prem Kirpal's "The Educationist", A. Rahman's "Views on Science and Technology", Aal-e-Ahmad Suroor's "A Literary Artist in Urdu" and Kapila Vatsyayan's "Educationist and Humanist".

Burney traces the beginning of Indian journalism from 1780, until Maulana Abul Kalam Azad embarked on his journalistic career in 1899

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<sup>2</sup> *Al-Hilal*, 5 (1) 7

<sup>3</sup> Presidential Address, Khilafat Conference, Agra, 25 October, 1921 *Khuthbat-e-Azad*, edited by Malik Ram



at the incredible age of eleven. Prior to 1912 it was a period of experimentation, but from 1912-1916, the *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh* period, he created a bench-mark for Urdu journalism. Mushirul Haq gives evidence to prove the radicalism of young Abul Kalam Azad which led him to establish links with the political underworld of Calcutta. He traces this predilection which resulted in the formation of *Hizbullah*. The article concludes with Maulana's attempt to get himself appointed to the office of *Imamul Hind* in order to create a focus for the leadership of the Muslims.

Kirpal assesses Maulana's contribution to education during the first decade of Indian Independence. He concludes that Maulana's tenure as Minister of Education was a sound investment towards building the future of the Indian education system. Rahman discusses Maulana's scientific temperament. The article quotes from several of his speeches to illustrate Azad's warning against the consequences of unwise use of scientific discoveries and technological developments.

Suroor traces the literary style of Azad through the entire corpus of his work. Starting with the journalistic period, particularly, *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, he covers *Tazkirah*, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, *Ghubar-i-Khatir* and his public addresses. Suroor finds in Azad a clear evolution of style from the extravagant use of words to compact, concise, simple language. Vatsyayan describes Maulana as a humanist, first and last. She refers to the fact that his phenomenal scholarship, extensive erudition, and mastery of theological issues, did not blunt his sensibilities as a poet and a connoisseur. During his term of office, the largest number of cultural bodies were established and funded, which further testifies to his commitment to the humanities.

Having briefly discussed the contents of this volume, the question is whether or not they have covered all aspects of Maulana's work. In the preparation of this volume the Editorial Board solicited contributions from several renowned historians and scholars of Azadiyat. Despite making commitments a few were not able to meet them. Therefore, given the fact that the volumes could not be held up, there may be certain gaps. It is hoped that the interest generated in Azad studies, as a consequence of these volumes, will result in more scholarly research and publications.

The last word on this subject can never be written. There was so much stored in the mind of the man, Abul Kalam Azad, which was left unexpressed. In a letter to his friend Ghulam Rasul Mehr, Maulana wrote:

*Afsos hai ke zamana mere dimagh se kaam lene ka koi samaan  
na kar saka. Ghalib ko to sirf apni ek shairi hi ka rona tha.  
Maloom nahin mere saath qabr men kya kya cheezen jayengi?*

It is a pity that these times could not take advantage of my cerebral capabilities. Ghalib lamented only his poetry. But who knows how many things will go down with me in my grave?

By his own admission there was a lot about himself he left unsaid. He neither enjoyed being written about nor the publicity that followed. His early biographers were extraordinarily persistent individuals, who were aware that if Maulana was given a chance to revise manuscript, he would stall it right there, making one excuse after another, never allowing it to be published. For that reason his friend Maulvi Fazluddin Ahmad started publishing *Tazkirah*, without seeking Maulana's permission. Another similar incident is recorded by his lifelong associate Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi who had taken notes for *Azad ki Kahani*, *Azad ki Zubani*, while they were interned at the Alipur jail. One important set of notes was irrevocably lost because Malihabadi handed it to Maulana on the latter's insistence that he wanted to revise it. Wiser for the experience, Malihabadi refused to part with any more biographical notes, despite Maulana's assurances of safely returning them.

The contents in this volume have been selected with due regard to Maulana's delicate sense of privacy. An attempt has been made to ensure that the dignity of both volumes matches the dignity of the man they are about. Two of his works, *Ghubar-i-Khatir* and *Tazkirah* are the best examples of his modesty and penchant for privacy. Whenever he writes about himself, he writes with restraint and decorum, using analogy, and inference, couching his language in metaphors and similes. The humility with which he presents his brilliant biography *Tazkirah* is proverbial.

*Kitab key naquais mere naqs-e-kar-o-zof-e-kalam ka nateeja hain Is liye sharmasaar aur mafi-khwah hoon Logon ne apni dil-jami aur faragh-i-khatir ki yadgaren chhori hain Apni pareshan khatir aur paragandagi-e-taba ki bhi ek yaadgaar rahe to behtar hai.*<sup>4</sup>

The defects of the book are a result of my faulty work and weak pen. I am, therefore, ashamed and beg your forgiveness. People have left behind records of their well ordered and well spent life. It may be best to leave a record of my disordered thoughts and disoriented life.

The other characteristic which is part of the decorum maintained in this volume is Maulana's intense preference for privacy, even exclusivity. This was a result of his heredity, environment, scholarship and singularity of purpose, which steered him towards keeping himself to himself. In *Ghubar-i-Khatir* he writes.

*Log bazaar men dukan lagaten hain to aisi jagah dhoond kar lagaten hain jahan kharidaron ki bheer lagti ho Main ne jis din apni dukan lagai to aisi jagah dhoond kar lagae jahan kam se kam gahakon ka guzar ho sakey,*

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<sup>4</sup> "Apology" by Abul Kalam Azad in *Tazkirah*, p. 5, editor Malik Ram

*Dar kue ma shikasta dili mi kharind o bas  
Bazaar-e-khud faroshi azan soo-e-digarast<sup>5</sup>*

When people set up shop in the market-place, they search and search until they find a place which is crowded with buyers. On the day I set up my shop, I looked for a place where the fewest customers walked by,

In my lane you can buy only broken hearts.  
The market for self promotion is elsewhere.

To sum up, a clear statement can be read as the common point in these eleven tributes and twenty articles. Maulana Azad, like his compatriots Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was a man with an ideal.

This ideal, simply stated, is the attainment of freedom. It has several implications. For Muslims to become equal partners in the freedom struggle, a proper understanding of Islam was essential. Therefore, Maulana felt impelled to explain the teachings of the Quran and disseminate them as widely as possible. The essential prerequisite for achieving the ideal of freedom was Hindu-Muslim unity. This was Maulana's creed upon which he was not willing to offer the slightest compromise. He was not prepared to buy freedom at the cost of splintering the country.

Till the end of his life he could not accept a fragmented motherland. Partition hit him where it hurt most, since he had spent every mental and material resource at his command to preach and justify Hindu-Muslim unity. This was the overriding purpose of his life. In *Ghubar-i-Khatir* he states the need in every human being for a purpose in life:

*Zindagi baghair kisi maqsad ke basar nahin ki jaati Koi atkao,  
koi lagao, koi bandhan hona chahiye jis ki khatir zindagi ke din  
katey ja saken Ye maqsad mukhtalif tabiyaton ke samne  
mukhtalif shaklon men ata hai*

*Zahid ba namaz-o-roza zabte darad  
Sarmad ba ma-o-piyala rabte darad*

Life cannot be spent without an objective. One needs an anchor, an affection, a bond, to pass the days of life. This objective takes different forms for different people.

In *namaz* and *roza* the ascetic spends his days  
The wine and the cup are Sarmad's reason for living.

Like the *Zahid* and *Sarmad*, Azad had a wager with life; all his activities converged towards this wager. Each tribute and assessment in this volume reaches this unanimous conclusion after following different lines of argument.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p 125

# **PART I**

## **As His Contemporaries Saw Him**



# Robust Nationalism

*Mahatma Gandhi*

SEVAGRAM, WARDHA,  
18 May, 1940

I have had the privilege of being associated with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in national work since 1920. In the knowledge of Islam he is surpassed by no one. He is a profound Arabic scholar. His nationalism is as robust as his faith in Islam. That he is today the supreme head of the Indian National Congress has a deep meaning which should not be lost sight of by any student of Indian politics.

M. K. GANDHI

Foreword to *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* by Mahadev Desai

# Tradition and Modernity

*Jawaharlal Nehru*

Soaked in Islamic tradition and with many personal contacts with prominent Muslim leaders and reformers in Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Iran, he (Maulana) was powerfully affected by political and cultural developments in these countries. Because of his writings he was known in the Islamic countries probably more than any other Indian Muslim. Abul Kalam Azad spoke in a new language to them (Muslims) in his weekly, *Al-Hilal*. It was not only a new language in thought and approach, even its texture was different, for Azad's style was terse and virile though sometimes a little difficult because of its Persian background. The older conservative leaders among Muslims did not react favourably to all this and criticized Azad's opinions and approach. Yet not even the most learned of them could easily meet Azad in debate and argument. He was a strange mixture of medieval scholasticism, eighteenth century rationalism and the modern outlook. Abul Kalam Azad attacked this stronghold of conservatism and anti-nationalism not directly but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Muslim intellectual circles, and, though the elders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation.<sup>1</sup>

Maulana is an extraordinarily interesting companion. The more I know him, and I have known him now for over twenty-one years, the more I find in him. I wish I could profit more by this enforced companionship. Meanwhile, I am having a peep into Urdu poetry. He tells me, or rather writes for me, a verse or two daily.<sup>2</sup>

How different we are from each other - a varied assortment of Indian types! Maulana is in many ways an astonishing person. His fund of knowledge is truly vast. His mind is keen as a razor's edge and his

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<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp 325-6

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Indira, dated 18 September, 1942. S. Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. XIII, p 15

commonsense strong. He and I are in some ways - in outlook, approach on life - poles apart. Yet I get on very well with him and there are very few persons whose opinion and advice on public or private matters I would value more. He is difficult to get into, and has a thick superficial covering which conceals the inner contents. Glimpses of the inner person surprise one continually. He is a curious combination of the old and the new. Perfectly familiar with the new world, in so far as one can be through books, his background is still eighteenth century or thereabouts. He adapts that to modern conditions, and does so remarkably well, but that background remains. There is something big in him — both as a scholar and man of action — still there is something lacking which prevents him from bearing rich fruit as he should. Fine thinker and magnificent writer as he is, with vast stores of information at his disposal, he should have turned out a host of splendid books. Yet his record is a very limited one. As a man of action also his record would have been a far more dominating one but for that lack of something. Is he too philosophical, or too cynical, or too sensitive? He is all that and yet the lack is of something else. I do not quite know what.

Compared to him, how small most other prominent men look. Jinnah, who has made good in his own way, is just an uncultured, untaught politician, with a politician's flair and instinct, and nothing more.

Perhaps it is a certain vital energy, the force of life that must out, that Maulana lacks. Perhaps he grew up too soon and was much too precocious. He is not old now by any means and yet there has always been a ripe maturity about him and it is difficult to think of him as a wild and passionate youth. When he was fourteen he was considered an accomplished scholar and, I think, he delivered lectures on logic and philosophy at that age! His intellect grew at the expense of other aspects of his nature. Not that he is at all austere or stoically indifferent to the world's ways. He is human and full of humour.

It is passion that he lacks. He is too intellectual, too cultured, to be carried away. Life must become rather a tame affair without passion.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has fallen to my lot often to refer in this House to the death of a colleague or some great man. I have to perform that duty, a sad duty, again today in regard to one who was with us a few days ago and who passed away rather suddenly, producing a sense of deep sorrow and grief not only to his colleagues in parliament, but to innumerable people all over the country.

Now it has become, if I may say so, almost a commonplace, when a prominent person passes away, to say that he is irreplaceable, that his passing away has created a void which cannot be filled. To some extent

3 Excerpt from his diary, Ahmednagar Prison, 25 December, 1942, S. Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. XIII, pp. 38-39.



that is often true, yet, I believe that it is literally and absolutely true in regard to the passing away of Maulana Azad. I do not mean to say that no great men will be born in India, certainly not. We have had great men and we will have great men, but I do submit that this peculiar and special type of greatness that Maulana Azad represented is not likely to be reproduced in India or anywhere else.

I need not refer to his many qualities which we all know - his deep learning, his scholarship and his great oratory. He was a great writer, and he was great in many ways, but there are other scholars, there are other writers, there are other orators. But there was this combination in him of the greatness of the past with the greatness of the present. He always reminded me of what I have read in history, about the great men of several hundred years ago, say, if I think of European history, the great men of the Renaissance, or, in a later period, of the Encyclopaedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect, men of action. He reminded me, also, of what might be called the great qualities of olden days - the graciousness of them. There were many bad qualities, of course, in the old days, but there was a certain graciousness, a certain courtesy, a certain tolerance, a certain patience which is hard to find in the world today. There is little graciousness in the world today, even though we may become more and more advanced in scientific and technical ways. Even though we may seek to reach the moon, we do it with a lack of tolerance, with a lack of some things which have made life worthwhile since life began. So, it was this strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and tolerance, and an understanding of the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was.

Everyone knows that even in his early teens he was filled with the passion for freeing India, and he turned towards ways even of violent revolution. He realized, soon after, that was not the way which would gain results.

He was a peculiar and a very special representative, in a high degree, of that great composite culture which has gradually grown in India. I do not mean to say that everybody has to be like Maulana Azad to represent that composite culture. There are many representatives of it in various parts of India; but he, in his own venue, here in Delhi or in Bengal, where he spent the greater part of his life, represented this synthesis of various cultures which have come, one after another to India; rivers that have flowed in and lost themselves in the ocean of Indian life, India's humanity, affecting them, changing them and being changed themselves by them.

So, he came to represent, more specially, the culture of India as affected by the culture of the nations of Western Asia, the Iranian culture, the Persian culture, the Arabic culture, which affected India for thousands of years - especially Iran - as everyone knows. In that sense I said that I can hardly conceive of any other person coming who can replace him,

because there was already a change in the age which produced him, and that age is past. A few of us are just relics, who have some faint idea of that age which is past.

I do not know if the generation that is growing up will ever have any emotional realization of that age. We are functioning in a different way, we think in a different way, and a certain gap in mental appreciation and understanding separates us, separates the generations.

It is right that we change, I am not complaining. Change is essential lest we become rooted to some past habit which, even if it was good at some time, becomes bad later. But I cannot help expressing a certain feeling of regret that with the bad, the good of the past days is also swept away, and that good was something that was eminently represented by Maulana Azad.

There is one matter I should like to mention here, a curious error to the expression of which I have myself been guilty, about Maulana Azad's life and education. Even this morning, the newspapers contained a Resolution of Government about Maulana Azad. The error is this, that it is stated - as I have stated sometimes - that he went and studied at Al Azhar University. He did not do so. It is an extraordinary persistence of error of wide circulation. And, as I said, I myself thought so. Otherwise, I would have taken care to correct it in the Government Resolution which has appeared today. The fact is that he never studied at Al Azhar University. He went, of course, to Cairo, he went as a visitor, to see it, but he never studied there. He studied elsewhere. He studied, in fact, chiefly in Calcutta, in the Arabic schools as well as other schools. But he spent a number of years in Arabia. He was born there and he visited Egypt as he visited other countries of Western Asia.

So, we mourn today the passing of a great man, a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect with an amazing capacity to pierce through a problem to its core. I have used the word 'luminous'. I think, perhaps, that is the best word I can use about his mind - a luminous mind. When we miss and when we part with such a companion, friend, colleague, comrade, leader, teacher - call him what you will - there is, inevitably, a tremendous void created in our life and activities.

It is possible that the initial reaction may not be a full realization of that void. The initial reaction is one of shock and sorrow. Gradually, as days pass, the void appears deeper and wider and it becomes more and more difficult to fill that place which was filled by a person who has passed away. But that is the way of the world and we have to face it. We have to face it not negatively but positively by devoting and dedicating ourselves to what he stood for and trying to carry on the good work which he and others who have left us - captains and generals of our peaceful forces who have worked for Independence and progress and the advancement of India, who have come and who have gone leaving their

message behind And so, I hope that though he may have gone, he will live, and his message will live and illumine us as it did in the past <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "The Passing of a Great Man", Humayun Kabir, ed., *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. A Memorial Volume*

# Buzurgi-b-aql ast ...

*Rajendra Prasad*

There is a Persian proverb, *Buzurgi-b-aql ast, na b-sal, Tawangari b-dil ast, na b-mal*, which means . superiority or greatness proceeds from wisdom and not from years; even as generosity proceeds from large-heartedness and not from possession of wealth. If ever there was a manifestation of the truth of this saying in our history, it was when Maulana Azad was elected President only after two to three years' service of the Congress at the age of thirty-four. Within this short period of great national awakening and excitement he had deeply impressed his colleagues and co-workers not only by his eloquence, but also by the keenness of his intellect, the soundness of his counsel and his capacity to reconcile conflicting viewpoints and bring about amity in the midst of diversity. His devotion to the country, preparedness for sacrifice and courage of conviction were demonstrated again and again during the long period of struggle, a great portion of which he, like many of his colleagues, spent in prison or detention camps.

He held fast to Hindu-Muslim unity and never budged an inch, standing firmly by it like a rock in the midst of uncharitable criticism and worse, from many of his own co-religionists. Naturally enough, all sections of the country came to love and respect him. His counsel was sought to resolve all complicated tangles and it was freely and frankly given without fear or favour. Equally, naturally, this trust in his wisdom, integrity and patriotism was exhibited when he was again elected President of the Congress in 1940, at a time when the Hindu-Muslim controversy was reaching a breaking point and a demand for a separate independent state for Muslims was being formulated and expressed. He continued as President during the most momentous period of Indo-British relations when negotiations for transfer of power were carried on, again and again, between the Congress through its President, Maulana Azad, and the representatives of the British Government.

I doubt if anyone else has held the responsible position of the President

of the Congress continuously for a period longer than or even equal to that of the Maulana and this too at a time when the most delicate and momentous questions were discussed. The Congress trusted his wisdom and integrity and he came out like pure gold through this most trying ordeal when the great bulk of his co-religionists were ranged on the other side.

It is not for me to speak about his learning and erudition. I am told that his commentary on the Holy Quran is recognized as authoritative not only in this country but also in other Muslim countries. In the midst of all his political activities, he retained his love of books and devoted not an inconsiderable portion of his time to studies. It has been said of Lokamanya Tilak that if he had not joined the political movement and instead devoted himself exclusively to Vedic studies, he would have made even more invaluable contributions to learning than he actually did. I believe the same is true of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad whose exclusive devotion to the study of Arabic and Persian could have produced similar results.

After the attainment of Independence he was naturally given the portfolio of education which included art, culture and scientific research. The great impetus and encouragement he was able to give to the development of art, literature and cultural activities and scientific research are demonstrated by the establishment of various academies and research laboratories and institutes, and the commissions which were appointed from time to time to deal with educational problems. He was a great representative of Indian culture which in its essence excludes nothing that is valuable and worth having, and absorbs what is good, noble and beautiful artistically, morally and spiritually.

The great demonstration of respect and affection which we witnessed during his journey to the burial ground was but a confirmation of our people's love and faith in his leadership and his capacity to guide.

Maulana Azad has abandoned the mortal coil, but his spirit will continue to inspire us and others yet unborn. May we prove worthy of this great heritage!

*Spoken at Delhi, 23 February 1958*

# Apostle of Unity

*S. Radhakrishnan*

We are too near the tragedy even to make a proper assessment of the great services rendered by Maulana Azad to our freedom movement and to our progress thereafter. He was a great scholar, a self-sacrificing patriot and a statesman. One great thing for which our people have to remember Maulana Azad is his work for India's unity. He was a devout Muslim and an ardent patriot. He felt that in this country, consisting of followers of many races and religions, all should work for national consolidation and progress. He suffered persecution on account of his views but he never faltered so far as his clear vision was concerned. It is essential for all of us to realise, in these days of growing separatism, that the most important factor in India's progress is consolidation of the country and subordination of all other interests to the supreme goal. That is the lesson we have to learn from him.

Maulana Azad believed in the principle of justice in public affairs and compassion in personal relations. This was a life of search and attainment. He lived, full of glory, a life of which every Indian can be proud. I have no doubt that his memory will abide in our hearts.

*Address at a public meeting held at Delhi, 23 February 1958*

# The Humanitarian

*Zakir Husain*

In order to make something of life, every man, be he great or small, seeks light and warmth from some source. When I was a boy, I also wanted to light the earthen lamp of my being. The first wick of my lamp, I lit from Maulana's lamp. As a student, I used to read his *Al-Hilal*. I used to read it aloud to a group of fellow students. It was then that my wick caught fire.

Maulana had a many-sided personality. He was not only a fighter for freedom and a great statesman, he was a great theologian and a great scholar as well. He was a great literary artist, and possessed an excellent taste and rare aesthetic sensibility. He loved books ardently. Let nobody imagine that he ever forsook scholarship and literature for politics. To the last, he was faithful to his first love. Yet he knew that knowledge could become a burden. It could weigh a person down and make him utterly ineffective. While he was supreme in learning, he was also fully conscious of his social responsibilities and the duties he owed to his country. He showed that he could fight for what was right, that he could devote his whole life to wrest the freedom of his country, and, after achieving that freedom, to strive to make something out of it, to build on its foundations the grand edifice of a good and graceful national life. He proved that learning is not some cabbalistic incantation meant to outwit and confuse simple folks, but a radiance which could light the path of others.

This scholar, thinker and warrior of righteousness has left a glorious example behind. Persons of discernment know that to speak out the true word, to declare the truth, the bitter truth, is the greatest 'jihad' (righteous war) of all. Telling the truth leads to much unpleasantness. People resent it. Did not they bear resentment against the Maulana? I address myself to fellow Muslims in the audience. Let us recollect, did we not use every possible means of hurting the Maulana's feelings? Did we not censure him in the worst possible terms? In spite of all that, did that soul of dignity ever utter a word against anyone? Is there any among you who can come forward and testify that by word or gesture he ever complained or

expressed resentment against his detractors? He bore all, never minding anything. Yet he never forebore from telling the truth.

He did not mix much with people. Of late, he had become even more retiring in his habits. But even though he met few people, he was a friend of all. Even though he kept to himself in his room, he was our comrade. He made us feel that he shared our life, for he shared and inspired our highest aspirations.

Maulana is no more with us. As the Rashtrapati (Dr. Rajendra Prasad) said, the pen which scattered pearls as well as hurled bolts, is no more, the tongue that showered petals as well as emitted sparks, which consumed falsehood and illumined truth, is no more. The pen lies broken and the tongue is silenced. But the Maulana lives, for his example survives, and we ought to borrow light and warmth from that example and orient our lives on the lines he desired and which he exemplified in his own life. We have a mighty task before us. It is not easy to build up the nation of ours. There is no magic or trick which can achieve it. Not one but many Abul Kalam's will have to live and die for India, not one but many generations will have to give their all before we can build up our nation.

For some time the firmament of our nation was resplendent with a host of brilliant stars. One by one they have vanished from our sight. But let us not mind that. Even if we mind it, what can we do about it? We are helpless. Go they must. It is God's will. None can bring them back.

However, our duty is clear. Let us try to fulfil the work of these great men. What was being done by one may perhaps be accomplished by a thousand jointly. But let us always strive to look in the direction shown by the great men, towards untarnished truth, towards selfless action, towards objective learning, towards mutual understanding. Let us realise that the duties that we owe in our life require to be fulfilled daily. There is never an end to duty.

In my opinion the greatest service which the Maulana did was to teach people of every religion that there are two aspects of religion. One separates and differentiates and creates hatred. This is the false aspect. The other, the true spirit of religion, brings people together, it creates understanding. It lies in the spirit of service, in sacrificing the self for others. It implies belief in unity, in the essential unity of things. And this is a lesson which must be learned by men of all religious denominations, by all those who want to form factions based on language or on caste or creed and thus aim to destroy the unity of our life. The disease which ails us today is that our small and narrow loyalties have succeeded in gaining the upper hand. We are more attached to little groups, and do not fully comprehend the biggest group. We have to subordinate our smaller loyalties to our bigger ones. It is not necessary to break or destroy the smaller loyalties. It is not necessary that we cease being a Sikh, a Hindu, a Muslim or a Parsi. But we must put our country and the whole mankind first before we can



be worthy of being called a true Muslim, a true Hindu, a true Christian, a true Parsi or a true Sikh. The life of Maulana offers a radiant example of this ideal. This is what we need most at present in our everyday life, in our body politics. We should firmly resolve today that we shall breathe this spirit — the true spirit of religion — into the life of our nation

*Address at a public meeting, held at Delhi, 23 February 1958*  
*Translated from Urdu to English by Arsh Malsiani*

# The Mind of Maulana

*Indira Gandhi*

At present there may be very few persons in the country who, from their childhood, had the privilege of knowing our big leaders. I remember Maulana Azad from the days of my early childhood. He was a pillar of strength to us during our struggle for freedom, and, afterwards when we laid the foundation of our democracy, I know how much regard and affection Jawaharlal Nehru had for him and how he sought his advice and followed it. Whenever Panditji had a problem he would think of Maulana Sahib and seek his advice. Often his advice turned out to be correct and both the Congress and the country followed it.

Like any other nation, we also had to face a number of initial difficulties after freedom. But the presence of a man like Maulana Azad amongst us gave us great strength and made our task easier. He was blessed with a rare intellect. Even when he was very young, he was known for his high thinking and his method of working. His association with India raised the stature of our country. If today we have learnt to live up to high ideals, Maulana Azad had a big hand in making this possible.

Maulana Sahib played an important role in propagating and strengthening unity in the country. He represented the diverse people and thought-processes of our country and varied influences of other countries on us.

Maulana Azad combined in himself the best of all the thought-processes and imbibed good things from the West, the Arabs and India's past. That is why he was a good and true representative of India. So long as we proceed on the path shown to us by him, we will progress on the right lines and our ideas will influence people of distant lands. If ever we turn back from that path and fall prey to narrow ideas, our country will be weakened, we will fight amongst ourselves, and will fail to lead a good life and improve our country.

On my behalf and on behalf of the Government and people of India, I pay homage to the memory of Maulana Azad. I hope that we will always

remember his ideas. His memory will ever remain green in our hearts, and will give us strength to move forward on the path shown by him.

*Speech at Maulana's death anniversary, Delhi, 23 February 1966*  
*Translated from Hindi*

# The Orator

*Jayaprakash Narayan*

At this point my mind goes back forty-six years to a memorable day in January 1921, when at a vast concourse of men in Patna, I listened enthralled to a stormy petrel of the non-cooperation movement, who though young in years had magic in his tongue. His name was Abul Kalam Azad.

*Convocation Address, Delhi University, 23 December 1966*

# Nationalist and Reformer

*Mohammad Hassan el Zayyat*

I am sorry for the delay, but great men like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad are not remembered only on a certain day of the year. They are always remembered, especially when the ideas and ideals they lived and fought for need to be reasserted. I feel there is greater need today to remember and reassert those ideas and ideals.

Azad was a nationalist and a social and cultural reformer. Though India and Egypt have attained their political and nationalist goals today, they still need to hear reformers such as Maulana Azad. The articles he wrote some seventy years ago in his two papers *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, warn of perils that have yet to be avoided and point to the way that we all still believe to be right and straight.

Maulana Azad visited Egypt in the beginning of this century and knew many leaders of both the nationalist movement as well as the movement for social and cultural reforms. He heard the traditionalists and the modernists. He took his stand with those who called for reform without abandoning their values or losing their cultural identity.

*Azad Memorial Lecture, 8 July 1983, "India and Egypt - Modern Relations between Two Ancient Nations"*

# The Naturalist

*Salim Ali*

Since his lecture is in memory of a great man whose learning and scholarship, no less than his humanism and statesmanship, have left such an indelible mark on our culture and nationalism, I may be permitted to begin with a personal digression. In the year 1948, when I happened to be engaged on a field survey of the bird fauna of the erstwhile Orissa states comprising the Eastern States Agency, I received a lunch invitation from Mr Asaf Ali, then Governor of the State, to meet Maulana Sahib, then the Union Minister for Education, who was visiting Cuttack, on tour. I was delighted at the prospect because shortly before this I had been reading in the camp with much delectation and many a chuckle Maulana Azad's inimitable essay 'Chirya Chiray ki Kahani' in his admirable Urdu classic *Ghubar-e-Khatir* written during his long incarceration in Ahmednagar gaol which began on 9 August, 1942 as aftermath of the "Quit India" resolution passed by the Indian National Congress under his Presidency.

As many here today may know, the narrative concerns a pair of house sparrows who had made up their minds, as determinedly as only a pair of house sparrows can, to build their nest in a hole above the Maulana's bed in his prison room. The pair worked assiduously all day-long bringing in straws and rubbish and attempting to stuff it into the selected hole, but succeeded only in dropping most of the litter on to the bed below. When, after several days, the birds remained undeterred by the active retaliatory measures, the owner of the bed took to dissuade and dislodge them—not all perhaps strictly non-violent by text-book definition—he was finally compelled to admit defeat. Thereafter he adopted a different policy, one of friendly appeasement, and by patience and perseverance succeeded to such an extent that he actually got the birds, and others of the jail sparrow community (not the other jail birds!) even to perch on his shoulder and to peck grain from his palm. This intimate familiarity fanned his interest

in the sparrows and prompted him to record his penetrating observations on the temperament, idiosyncrasies, social behaviour and marital relations of each individual, with an insight that would do justice to a trained naturalist. He classified different individuals according to their various qualities, and the humour and incisiveness of the descriptions with the chasteness of his Urdu diction, eruditely interlarded with appropriate Persian couplets, reeled off from a prodigious memory, make them a rare treat to read. For example, one of his more bouncing visitors he distinguishes by the name of 'Mulla' and puckishly describes his qualifications as "argumentative, garrulous, quarrelsome, and one who managed to elbow himself to precedence over newcomers and sermonized (chirped) from on high (an elevated perch)." Then, in the same puckish strain he asks, "What other name could be given to such a character?"

*"Bird Study in India Its History and its Importance"*  
*Azad Memorial Lecture, 19 December 1978*

# A King Among Men

*M. Chalapathi Rau*

The nation mourns the passing away of the grand monseigneur of our public life. Maulana Azad was grand in his passion for freedom, grand in his utterance, grand in his understanding, grand in his acceptance of life. A great scholar, he was, no less, a great statesman. He was a man of letters who easily became a man of affairs. In him religion and nationalism enriched each other. Belonging to the aristocracy of intellect, he easily identified himself with people's movement. He did not live in compartments, he discarded narrow scholasticism. While scorning delights, he demonstrated the majesty of the human spirit. After prodigious feats of learning in his early years, he attained a serenity of temper and certitude of faith which could never be shaken. Never was so much learning turned into so much wisdom. He enriched Indian public life with elegance, passion, catholicity, and eloquence, he endowed it with grand overtures.

It is difficult to recall any adequate parallel to this prince among patriots, except from the richest periods in history. He could have been a contemporary of Erasmus, the greatest humanist of the Renaissance, he could have worked comfortably in the company of Luther, the great leader of the Reformation, he could have matched his wisdom with the astuteness of the cardinal statesmen of Europe in the seventeenth century. In twentieth century India, he brought to Islam and to Indian nationalism the spirit of a new Renaissance, a new Reformation, and a political wisdom equal to the new needs. To Islam in India, developing a narrowness bred by foreign influence, he brought a breadth of outlook from the austerities of Arabia and from the world's oldest university, and he wrote and spoke like a prophet. He was a theologian who made of theology a broad, new, rich humanism. He was no grey eminence. He would not accept the dogma of ancient texts or the dogma of new protestantism. To the Quran he brought back a faith freed from cluttering commentary. Undeviatingly true to the purpose of his life, he fought the battle of sound learning and



plain commonsense against ignorance, superstition, and obscurantism. He had no metaphysical inclinations and never lost his mental balance. Though learned in divinity, he proclaimed the rights of reason and exercised them. Indian nationalism received from him its equanimity of temper which helped it to remain true to its heritage. In religious matters, he was a great intermediary between scholasticism and modernism. Neither Calvinistic nor Hedonistic, he contributed to the evolution of new values in life, particularly in the difficult times after freedom. Maulana Azad made a sustained contribution to secularism with imperious gestures of modernism, of which the Muslim League was but a by-product and Pakistan an aberration.

Maulana Azad's contribution as one of the outstanding political leaders of the time will remain imperishable. He was second to none in intellect, in patriotism, and in understanding. He did not need to cultivate convictions, he breathed them. It was a tribute to the genius of Gandhi that a great prodigy of Islam threw himself into the national struggle under his leadership. Early, Maulana Azad gave the sensation of rationalism to the world of *mullas*. As President in the most troubled phase of the history of the Congress, he spoke not only with flaming faith but with a clarity which accepted no compromise. In his oratory, argument predominated over resonant diction. To listen to a speech by him or to attend one of his press conferences was education in public issues. For years the Congress Working Committee has depended on his frank and balanced approach to problems; he clarified the most difficult situations and annihilated divisions. He was the oracle who spoke rarely but rightly. He has been one of the generating forces of present-day progressivism. Nehru could not have had a better and truer guide and friend in these formative years of freedom, and the Indian state a better stabilising, balancing force. Maulana Azad had no shallow antipathies, he was for the utmost freedom of expression for all political forces. To the Muslims in India, he spoke with great foresight at Ramgarh, in 1940.

Politically speaking, the word minority does not mean just a group that is numerically smaller and, therefore, entitled to special protection. It means a group that is so small in number and so lacking in other qualities that give strength, that it has no confidence in its own capacity to protect itself from the much larger group that surrounds it ..

If this is the right test, let us apply it to the position of the Muslims in India. You will see at a glance a vast concourse, spreading out all over the country; they stand erect, and to imagine that they exist helplessly as a minority is to delude oneself.

Maulana Azad did not think in terms of communities, religions, parties

and groups. He believed in the fellowship of faiths and asserted the magnificence of the human mind. To cherish his memory, the best that the nation can do is to live with his noble passion the way of life that he lived.

*National Herald, 23 February 1958*



## **PART II**

### **Synchronistic Views**



# The Last Journey

*Shorish Kashmiri*

Around a quarter past three (IST), I landed in Delhi. The sorrow in my heart pervaded the atmosphere. It took me half an hour to complete the police and customs formalities. Then I caught a taxi to the Parade Ground, which lay straight across the Jama Masjid. Every face that I glimpsed on the way seemed to be tear-drenched. In the market that stretched on both sides, from Turkman Gate to Daryaganj and extended to the Urdu Bazaar, there was nothing but a sea of human beings. Mourners stood on rooftops. On the other side of the Chandni Chowk, on the grounds of the Jama Masjid and Red Fort, throngs of people were gathered. Grief filled the space between the earth and sky.

When I arrived, the *Namaz-i-Janaza* (funeral prayer) had already been held and Maulana was being lowered into the grave. Rajen Babu and Pandit Nehru were sprinkling handfuls of dust. Getting past the police cordon, I reached the grave. Taking a handful of dust, I offered it with my tears as libation. Everyone was weeping. The red slabs of the Red Fort seemed to be whispering to the white domes of the Jama Masjid,

*Ek shama rah gai thi so woh bhi khamosh hai*

Only one candle had remained, that too is now silent.

Pandit Nehru gave a helping hand to the distressed Rajen Babu and said, "One, who used to mourn over the shedding of flowers, today he is lying beneath a mound of dust." Governors of Indian states, Ministers of the Union Cabinet, and Ambassadors of different countries were returning after having offered their floral tributes. Five lakh people had formed the funeral procession and jostled one another to offer a handful of dust. During his life this man shied away from the crowds, at his death he was submerged in a human sea of veneration.

Ajmal Khan told me that the evening before his stroke, Maulana was unusually happy. When he returned home after the cabinet meeting, a little later than his usual office hour, his face was glowing. No one could

have suspected that the fatal disease was to strike him down in a few hours.

According to Professor Humayun Kabir, only two days before the tragic incident Maulana returned to him the revised manuscript of the English version of *India Wins Freedom*

Major-General Shahnawaz, who had been with him during his last days, gave an account of his growing aloofness. Towards the end, for months, he would not give time even to his cabinet colleagues. Governors and Ministers would often leave after signing the Visitor's Book. Pandit Nehru, whenever he was in Delhi, visited him twice a week.

I do not remember whether this was about the Emperor of Iran or of Saudi Arabia. When Pandit Nehru held a dinner in honour of one of them, he persuaded Maulana to grace the occasion. Shahnawaz, who was present, recalls that Maulana came to the dinner with his distinct individual dignity, superior to that of the Emperor. As soon as he was seated, he asked, "*Jawahar, khane mein takheer kya hai? Mere bhai, jaldi karo*" (Jawahar, what's the delay? Make haste, my brother). The table was laid immediately. After tasting the soup, Maulana left the party.

The Shah of Hejaz was invited for dinner at Maulana's residence. Rajen Babu came, Panditji arrived, all important dignitaries assembled, but the host was nowhere to be seen. The secretary announced that he was taken ill. The party was held without him.

Recounting a few similar incidents, Shahnawaz told me that three days ago, Maulana was in his elements at a dinner held in honour of Zahir Shah, the King of Afghanistan. He talked with Zahir Shah in fluent Persian, and with such candour that the King was visibly impressed. Maulana was narrating the history of the delicacies served at the table and the use of spices in different periods. In particular, he gave a very elaborate and detailed account of the history of *Kofta*. He enthralled the King and captivated the guests by reciting Persian couplets.

Nobody could have imagined what would happen to this great scholar and antiquarian in the next three days. For quite a while he had suffered from cardiac problems. His writings reflect his deteriorating condition. When he suffered the stroke, events ran amuck. Pandit Nehru and Rajen Babu arrived within ten minutes. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray, Chief Minister of Bengal, was urgently summoned and arrived by plane. It was generally believed that the immediate danger was over; but his condition slowly deteriorated. Nothing seemed to work. Dr. Bidhan Chandra was in and out of his room all the time. The top physicians tried their best. However, *Malikul-maut ko yeh zid thi ke jan le ke taloon* (The angel of death was unyielding; wanting nothing less than life). Medicines proved useless; even prayers lost their effect.

Death makes no distinction between the scholar and the unlettered man. By the afternoon of 21 February, the end became evident. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Major-

General Shahnawaz, Dr Syed Mahmud Khan, Mohammad Yunus Khan, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Professor Humayun Kabir and others realised that Maulana was in the grasp of death. On the suggestion of Maulana Hifzur Rahman Seoharvi, it was decided that the land behind the mausoleum of Sarmad Shaheed in the Parade Ground would be designated as his burial place. At dusk, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Hifzur Rahman visited the location and marked the spot for his grave.

During his fatal illness, in addition to his secretary, Ajmal Khan, his nephew Nuruddin, his sister's son-in-law Mohammad Yusuf, and a few others were in continuous attendance. For three days Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Mr. Prabodh Chandra, Mohammad Yunus Khan, Maulana Hifzur Rahman, and Major-General Shahnawaz hovered around his bedside. Panditji and Rajen Babu would leave him for a while, but would rush back immediately.

Maulana remained unconscious during the entire period of his last illness, he neither opened his eyes nor moved his lips. Shahnawaz says that the occasional quivering of his lips indicated that he was reciting verses from the Quran. On the morning of 21 February, the doctors declared his body dead. They were amazed that his brain continued to function for twenty-four hours after his body had been declared dead. In this paradox, there was still hope for life. When Dr Bidhan Chandra Ray wanted to give him an injection, Maulana opened his eyes and said

*Doctor Sahib, ab Allah par chhoriye*

Before midnight his condition had deteriorated even further. Pandit Nehru came and stood by his bed. Then Rajen Babu, holding back his tears, spoke,

*Maulana Sahib, Panditji aye hain*

But Abul Kalam was in the throes of death. Rajen Babu repeated these words a third time, and a fourth. Maulana opened his eyes and said,

*Accha bhai, Khuda Hafiz!*

Pandit Nehru could not restrain his emotion and moving to the foot of his bed, he touched Maulana's feet and went out on the verandah. Maulana's condition worsened. Since the early hours of the night (the time of Isha prayer) the recital of the Holy Quran had begun. Maulana Hifzur Rahman, Maulana Mohammad Miyan, Mufti Atiqur Rahman, Syed Sabihul Hasan, Maulana Shahid Fakhri and a few other scholars and divines were reciting the word of God.

During the dead of night, the *Sura-i-Yasin* was recited. At a quarter past two, death stretched its arms to embrace this outstanding man, who even in these worst of times was the most distinguished Mussalman...

On the grounds of the King Edward Road bungalow four hundred



people had been braving the icy cold of the night, keeping vigil and warming themselves with the flame they carried within their hearts. His last breath seemed to scatter these words, "The object of your devotion has become one with his God." Then there was pandemonium of human grief. Delhi bowed her head in sorrow. The flame which had been kindled on her grand arch had been blown out forever. With tearful eyes, India saw her national flag being lowered. People lowered the banners of their hearts. God's benevolence had embraced the Ibn-i-Taimmiyyah of this age.

Within moments, the news of his demise had spread throughout the world. India became a house of mourning. In Delhi, business stood still. Even the banks stopped functioning. People say that Delhi had rarely witnessed such sincere mourning.

Like his other colleagues, Pandit Nehru believed that Maulana's last rites should be an exclusive affair, since Maulana had always shied away from crowds. But no sooner was the announcement made than some two lakh people surrounded the bungalow. Sounds of grief and mourning became louder. For six long hours, clusters of people poured in to pay their last homage to their great leader. People of every religion, community, and creed, Hindus and Sikhs, men and women, paid their homage to the deceased with folded hands. Tears welled in all eyes. On one side stood Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Republic of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Vice President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other dignitaries, with tear-filled eyes as if wishing that they had not lived to see this day. On the other side, people filed past, paying their last homage. Thousands of bereaved Muslim women, in burqas, were seen assembled at one place in New Delhi, for the first time since Independence. When they filed past the mortal remains of Maulana, they were heard lamenting, "Maulana, you too have gone, in whose care have you left us?" It seemed as if in death's deep repose, Maulana was saying

Loss of faith is tantamount to death. The minarets of Shahjehan's mosque stoop to ask you, "Where have you misplaced the pages of your history? Once your caravan had moved along these paths. Your history is scattered over this land. This is the Jamuna that gave your ancestors the water for *Wuzu* and this is the Earth that had once hearkened to your vigorous *Azaan*."

When Hindu women paid homage to the departed Maulana with folded hands, the mosque seemed to look on in amazement. Maulana was the only Muslim in the annals of human history whose death was being mourned with equal intensity by both the mosque and the temple.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the embodiment of grief. Thousands tried to console him, while he, in turn, consoled others. The vast lawns were filled with people, and more were milling at the entrance to get in. Pandit

Nehru stood guard at the portico, holding back the crowds, like an ordinary volunteer, "Wait Where are you going?" When he was called to lend a shoulder to the *janaza*, he happened to glance at his security officers:

Who are you?

Security Officer

Why?

For your safety

What safety? Death comes at its appointed time If you could save, why not Maulana?

Prabodh reports that with these words he started sobbing uncontrollably At a quarter to one the funeral procession started moving The first to shoulder the *Janaza* were the Arab ambassadors They wept as the *Kalma-e-Shahadat* was recited Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, General Shahnawaz Khan, Mohammad Yunus Khan, Maulana Hifzur Rahman, Mr Krishna Menon, Mr Prabodh Chandra and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad placed the *janaza* on the gun carriage Rashtrapati Rajen Babu, who had stood woe begone since morning, tearfully said, "This is the end of thirty-eight years of friendship and association " His voice quivering with pain, Pandit Pant said, "People like Maulana will not be born again, I will never see one like him " Pandit Nehru wept. Maulana Hifzur Rahman's hoary beard was wet with tears Lamentations filled the air Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr Radhakrishnan, the ambassadors and the ministers, all said their last prayer

Standing on the terrace, Arzoo Begum, Maulana's elder sister, took a last look at her brother's cortege and said, "Now no more desires are left in me."

Nehru stood at the right and Mr Dhebar at the left of the bier With Nehru was Maulana Hifzur Rahman Seoharvi and behind him stood General Shahnawaz Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Prof Humayun Kabir were standing with Mr Dhebar

Maulana's apparel was a khadi *kafan* He was wrapped in the Indian national flag over which was spread a Kashmiri shawl According to the report published in the *Tej*, Delhi, the cover of Kaaba was spread over the *janaza*

Behind the gun carriage, in the first car, were the President and the Vice-President of the Republic Behind them, Members of the Parliament, Chief Ministers of different states, Governors and members of diplomatic missions

Chiefs of staffs of the Indian armed forces flanked the carriage on both sides The funeral procession passed through India Gate and Harding Bridge, receiving the tributes of lakhs of people. When it reached

Daryaganj, for this stretch of a quarter mile, flowers started pouring from everywhere. Nothing was visible except a shower of petals. When the procession reached the Muslim populated area around Jama Masjid it was a different scene. The terraces of Jama Masjid, its long winding staircases, the space beneath its arches and the roofs of the houses and shops were all filled with mourners. According to the most conservative estimate, there were five lakh people on the Parade Ground. The chant of *Nara-i-Takbir* filled the air, and so loud were the cries of "Long Live Maulana Azad," that the minarets seemed to whisper to one another.

On his death, for the first time in ten years, Muslims have opened their lips for the recitation of *Takbir*. Dying, he has infused life into the Muslims.

Hidden behind veils, the eyes were damp. On one side of the grave, the maulvis recited the Holy Quran. On the other, stood the dignitaries with bowed heads. A thousand soldiers of the Infantry, three hundred men of the Air Force, and five hundred sailors of the Indian Navy, with great flourish, saluted the deceased. At 2.50 p.m. Maulana Ahmad Saeed Dehlvi led the *namaz-i-janaza*.

The moment the Imam finished the prayer, the Fort and the Mosque echoed with the sound of *Nara-i-Takbir*. As the *janaza* was brought to the grave, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs stood with folded hands. The army played the funeral dirge. The Muslims, with one voice, confessed to God's oneness and the Prophethood of Mohammad.

Maulana Ahmad Saeed lowered the body into the grave. No coffin for him. A memorable body, shrouded in white, was laid on the dust. Rajen Babu, his eyes damp, offered flowers at the grave. Sprinkling rose water, Pandit Nehru broke down, and when he gave a handful of dust to the body he wept like a child. The brooding atmosphere was occasionally elevated by the *Nara-i-Takbir*. Wherever we looked, we saw faces drenched in tears. The lamentations of old Dr. Mahmud could be heard from a distance.

Until late that night hordes of mourners crowded around the place. Many spent the first two nights at the grave. Some people recited the Holy Quran and prayed for his soul. During the three days that I was present at the grave, I saw an unending stream of people at all hours. Hindus and Sikhs, men and women would come, pay their floral tribute, salute the grave and go back. Though the Muslims and the non-Muslims were grieved alike, the nature of their loss was different. The Muslims seemed to be hardest hit on one count. Some voiced it, others showed it on their faces. "What will happen now? Our last hope has departed with Maulana. Maulana is not buried, four crore Muslims of India are buried."

History is full of the atrocities which the Muslims have inflicted on their own people. Death has always testified to their greatness. Those

whose teachings form the basis of our thought, belief, vision and philosophy, were condemned, imprisoned, and held in chains. Unable to stand public malice and private cruelties, they were often compelled to take refuge in death. Muslims often denied them a decent burial. But with the passage of time, history bowed its head before their greatness.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, too, had to traverse the difficult path taken by Muslim leaders and teachers. According to Dr. Zakir Husain, Muslims did not spare him any calumny. But, he was immensely patient and tolerant. There was a remarkable similarity between his life and that of Ibn-i-Taimmiyyah, which holds true even after death. Just as his presence left no aspect of life unaffected, so also, his death has left every sphere of life in mourning. So long as he was alive people maligned him for political expediency. Now that he is no more, his tomb has become the place of pilgrimage, both for the commoner and the dignitary.

*Mai gaye hum to zamane ne bahut yaad kiya*

When I died, the world remembered me often

The reverend Shaikh Abdul Qadir Raipuri used to compare Maulana's patience with that of Prophet Ayub. Maulana always had his detractors, but today the entire country agrees that Maulana was India's brain. He was the mind behind most of the important decisions of the Indian cabinet, his opinion was sought on all crucial matters. Only he could prevail upon Nehru's stubbornness and bring him around to his way of thinking.

The story is long. Lala Bhimsen Sachar, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, and successor to Meer Osman Ali, has promised to write a detailed piece on this, which, *inshallah*, will be published in *Chattan's* special issue on Abul Kalam Azad. Mr. T. Krishnamachari's resignation is a very recent example. Pandit Nehru was not in favour of accepting his resignation. In Parliament he showed open disagreement with the verdict of Justice Munir Chagla. At a Cabinet meeting, however, Maulana persuaded Panditji

Brother, this is not the time to go into the merits of the report. You appointed a judge for the inquiry, and the judge prepared a report and has given his verdict. It becomes obligatory for us to respect the judiciary and accept its verdict without any reservation. If we fail to respect the judiciary, it would set a wrong precedence, and its results, naturally, would be very dangerous for the morale of the nation.

Panditji had no option but to agree with Maulana, and, despite his private inclination, relieve the Finance Minister of his responsibilities.

The clamour against the Maulana in the *Sangathan* section of the Indian Press was a result of Maulana keeping a close watch on the affairs of his colleagues, chiding them on their lapses, and, whenever he found a particular interest trying to assert itself, trying to prevent it from gaining the upper hand. Pandit Nehru has rightly said

Structures of bricks and stones will be erected in his memory. The intensity of the grief that envelopes my heart and mind will gradually decline; but I wonder who will I go to when I need advice? During a crisis, he was the one who used to get us out of the quagmire

I had heard of and, later, seen Nehru's grief. He was deeply affected by Maulana's death. During his illness, which lasted precisely four days, Panditji mostly remained with him. If he had to go out, he would return before long. The author's friend, Mr. Prabodh Chandra, who stayed near Maulana throughout this period, reports that it was impossible to describe Panditji's anxiety in words. He desperately hoped that Maulana would recover, knowing perfectly that he couldn't! On the last evening Prabodh had the following exchange with Panditji

You have not eaten anything the whole day, at least, have a cup of tea.  
Tea?

Yes

Well, make me a cup

When Prabodh came with the tea, Panditji was coming out of Maulana's room

Panditji, here is your tea.

Tea?

Yes

No. I won't have tea. Oh Maulana!

With a deep sigh he went back to the room.

Next day when there was company present, Ajmal wanted to tell him something. He said, "I will be right back, let me see Maulana." Maulana had been buried twenty-four hours.

I am not talking of Nehru, the politician, I am talking of Nehru, the artist, who in a burst of emotion started to ask the flower beds "Where is Maulana?"

The author believes that Iqbal and Abul Kalam were the two most distinguished Muslims and best minds of this century. They held different political views, but both of them modestly withdrew from the public eye. Iqbal lies in a tomb besides the Shahi Mosque in Lahore, facing the Royal Fort, adjacent to Hazoori Bagh. Maulana found his place of last repose between the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid. He was the human embodiment of the grandeur of these two monuments. The first evidence of Maulana's literary accomplishment was his essay on Sarmad Shaheed, and it is a pleasant coincidence that he is buried near Sarmad's tomb. A few steps

away there are two more graves. One, near the tomb of Sarmad, is that of his mentor Hare Bhare Sahib, and the other, on the way to Urdu Bazar, is that of Maulana Shaukat Ali.

*Haie o maut, tujhe maut hi aie hoti*

Alas ! death be on death.

*“Maulana Abul Kalam Azad ka Safar-e-Akhirat”, Chattan,  
3 March 1958*

### **My Faithfulness You Will Remember**

My veneration for Maulana Azad has always found its expression in the pages of *Chattan*. The editor of *Chattan* owes his achievements in writing and oratory, to his gleanings from Maulana. He learnt the lessons of self realization from his readings of Iqbal and Azad. He considers this his greatest asset. He cannot abandon this treasure for fear of the risk involved in acknowledging it, or because it is frowned upon by some.

On his death anniversary, every year, recollections crowd the mind and memories are revived. Not only have the Muslims been unjust to him, even his companions did him a disservice. This is no occasion for launching a debate; but it is the biggest misfortune of history that the one who was, to quote Dr Zakir Husain, the greatest essayist of Urdu, was not spared any expletive in the very same language. Maulana always regretted being born during an age which was not suited to his temperament. Numerous were the secrets, political and national, that went with him to his grave. Even now, there aren't too many of his associates and companions left and that tribe is dwindling fast. Scholars on both sides of the border are guided by expediency, and their narrow national interests.

While others' thoughts are confined or restricted, Maulana's thoughts stretched to outer ranges, no limits. But he suffered most at the hands of his own people, so much so that in his later years he became disappointment personified. No one in the subcontinent shared his deeper concerns or his foresight. Nature had blessed him with the sensitivity of the orient and the insight of the occident. In the words of Ghalib, from the great Beneficent he had received a tender heart. And in the words of the Philosopher of the Orient, he was the image of "*Nigah buland sukhan dilnawaz jaan pursoz*." He hailed the people, awakened them, entreated them, until on February 22, before dawn, he became one with his creator. It has been seven years since that date, but it seems he may just turn around and ask,

*Kis haal mein ho, yaaran-i-watan?*

How are you, Oh my countrymen?

Who has ever escaped death? Now his memories are lodged at the crossroads of history, and it is difficult to say whether destiny will follow them, or they will follow destiny.

*“Meri Wafayen Yaad Karoge”, Chattan, Abul Kalam Azad Number,  
15 February 1965.*

# The Voice of Reason

*Acharya J. B. Kripalani*

My acquaintance with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad dates as far back as 1913. It was through the columns of his weekly Urdu journal, *Al-Hilal*. Those were the great days of Indian journalism - the days of Tilak, Bipin Pal and Aurobindo and a host of other writers. Maulana's journalistic contribution ranked among the best. I was then a professor of history and politics in a college in Bihar. It was a wonder to me how a man so young in years and who knew no modern European language, could yet discuss the internal and international contemporary political scene with the assurance of a mature and well-trained expert. He viewed the question of Indian freedom in the context of colonialism in general, and the Islamic lands in particular. For him, the emancipation of India from the shackles of British imperialism was a necessary condition for breaking the chains that had been and were being forged by Western imperialist nations, principally British, to bind Islamic lands. Indian soldiers had been used everywhere to enslave other lands and peoples. For the Maulana, therefore, the Indian national struggle was not only a duty to the motherland but also to Islam.

For what the Maulana wrote in his paper and his suspected revolutionary activities, he was interned in Ranchi in 1916. At Ranchi, too, though I had not yet met him personally, I was in touch with him through mutual friends in the revolutionary movement of those days.

The Maulana Sahib was released from detention in 1920. The Independence and the Khilafat movements had already started under Gandhiji's leadership. The prominent Muslim leaders in the movement were Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Sahib and the Ali brothers. The last, the Ali brothers, were then the most active and popular leaders. They were a contrast to the first three, who were urbane, refined and sensitive, but more useful in the Council Chamber than at public meetings and demonstrations. Maulana Sahib was often present at public and Khilafat gatherings, but he would quietly and unobtrusively take his place at the back of the platform; he would rarely speak. But when he was



prevailed upon to do so, it was a delight to listen to his silvery eloquence and well-reasoned presentation of a cause he had made his own. There was no effort to rouse emotions. Yet, in his case reason could be so reasonably convincing that it did affect the emotions. Once I asked Gandhiji why he appeared to prefer the Ali brothers with their exuberant spirit and loud tone to the intellectual, cultural and retiring Maulana Sahib? Gandhiji's reply was significant. He said that he knew the great learning of the Maulana and his refined ways, but however much he tried to induce him to the forefront, he would resist the attempt. This would not make for leadership of a popular movement. I have not related this talk to make any invidious comparison, but in the interest of historical truth and to bring out the character of the Maulana.

But what he lacked in mass appeal at the time was more than made up by his unswerving and steady loyalty to his ideals of national Independence and Hindu-Muslim unity. Many of his Muslim compatriots of those days fell prey to the British policy of keeping the two major communities apart, but the Maulana remained always faithful to the path he had chalked out for himself in his early youth. He steadily worked on, undeterred by the opposition of his community and the insults heaped upon him.

In 1923, he was chosen the President of the Special Session of the Congress held in Delhi. It was his moderating influence that avoided a cleavage at the time between the Pro-Changers and the No-Changers.

What, then, are the outstanding impressions left on those who had the privilege of being associated with the Maulana for more than three decades, particularly in the days of India's struggle for Independence? It is that in matters fundamental, he had thought out things for himself in his early youth and had come to certain definite conclusions. These were that India must be free, free not only for its own sake but for the sake of the rest of the colonial world, including the Islamic countries. There was, therefore, no cleavage between his duties as a citizen of India and as a Muslim divine. Also, when like some others, he joined the non-violent movement for the Independence of India under Gandhiji's leadership, he did so with the utmost sincerity and conviction. He realized that the only way to Independence was to bring into the movement, the masses of India, without whose combined action, freedom of the country would be impossible. This could only be done through avoidance of secrecy and through non-violence. Fortified by this conviction, he never wavered in his faith or in the leadership of Gandhiji. Of course, like many others, he did not believe in non-violence as a creed, but remained loyal to the policy that had been adopted by the Congress after careful thought and consideration, on practical grounds, of what was possible. For Maulana Sahib, there was no further toying with the idea of a violent revolution or association with its advocates. The same cannot be said of several other leaders, specially in Bengal.

These convictions stood the test of time. No vicissitude in his own political life or the alignment of forces in the country could change them. No misrepresentation of his motives, no calumny, no insults from inferior persons - for he was a sensitive soul - could deflect him from the path he had chosen for himself. He, who stood for good sense and moderation in all things, stood like a rock where his basic convictions were concerned. About these there could be no compromise.

Though my personal association with the Maulana began in 1920, it was as a member of the Congress Working Committee and the General Secretary of the Congress that I came in close contact with him. It was not always possible for me to see eye to eye with Maulana Sahib in all the details of the Congress Party, or on particular issues, but one could not fail to appreciate his general approach to national problems and his intellectual grasp of things. It was also difficult not to be impressed by his scholarship, which was deep and wide. It did not sit heavy on him. For years the Congress Working Committee was just like a family, and in the family circle Maulana Sahib's great scholarship and his genial temperament enlivened his conversation whenever we of the Congress Working Committee met at lunch, tea or dinner, or, when at Wardha we enjoyed the simple but large-hearted hospitality of that patriot of the mercantile community, Jamnalal Bajaj.

The company was regaled with anecdotes drawn from history, geography and the biographies of great personages in history, particularly from Islamic countries. He would tell us where a particular custom rose or from where a particular fruit or dish was introduced in India. With Sarojini Naidu's not always quite innocent gossip, with Sardar's humorous sallies and Maulana Sahib's learned and well-informed conversation, the company never lacked interest. I believe that in those anxious days of our struggle for Independence, full of complicated difficulties, we enjoyed life with a zest that can come only from tension created by a high and noble purpose.

From the very beginning of his career, Maulana Sahib was something of an internationalist. The circumstances of his birth, upbringing, and education and studies endowed him with a wide perspective. As an Islamic divine one would have expected him to be rather orthodox in his religious views. But his attitude towards religion was very liberal and catholic. This was not because he was indifferent or easy-going but because of his philosophical and historical knowledge and his understanding and generous heart. With his innate goodness, it was impossible for him to think that salvation for humanity lay through a particular religion, a particular prophet or one set of doctrines, rituals and dogmas. For instance, he would not have considered that the men of other faiths with whom he was associated in national life, would have been better or more acceptable to him if they had but accepted Islam. This was the attitude of

some Muslim leaders who took part in the Khilafat and the national movement in the twenties Maulana considered that the essence of religion lay in moral conduct, and, if one delved deeper into the dark recesses of life, in mysticism.

Jawaharlal Nehru was right when in Parliament, paying tribute to his memory, he said that the Maulana Sahib reminded him of scholars and humanists of the European Renaissance and the French encyclopaedists of the 18th century. I wonder if, when Jawaharlalji said this, he realized that while Maulana's thought was free as theirs, in his actions, in social life, his conduct, like theirs, was restricted and inhibited by well-established custom and convention. May be, like them, and the great Hindu philosophers and pundits, Maulana Azad realised that the learned had no right to confuse the understanding of the ordinary man wedded to form and convention so long as these were not harmful. Yet the Maulana also appreciated those who deviated from social conventions in order to meet the requirements of modern life and thought. It is this trait in the Maulana that prevented him from being a religious and social reformer. His very intellectual range precluded him from a role which needs an amount of dogmatism, if not fanaticism.

His was essentially a voice of reason, which would also mean moderation and sanity. These qualities were characteristic of him even in the revolutionary fight for India's Independence. Though he guided the crowd, he was shy of it; he was not of it. Gandhiji influenced many aristocrats by birth or position to rub shoulders with the crowd in those days. But the Maulana throughout remained his own self, an aristocratic intellectual who viewed the crowd with indulgence from his great eminence.

However, all this did not make him insensitive to justice and fair play. It is well known that after Independence many popular causes had his support in the counsels of the mighty created by the new order. Among them his was an independent voice. Where none could oppose, he ventured to remonstrate. On rare occasions, he did succeed. On his death, it was thus natural for popular opinion to feel that the restraining influence of sanity had disappeared from the political life of the country.

Maulana was pre-eminently an intellectual and a scholar. Like several other leaders in the national movement, given a free choice, he would not have entered the political arena and would have pursued in quiet the life of letters. But in a subject country, there can be no free choice for the sensitive and the conscientious. It is not politics that draws them. It is the cause of justice and patriotism that beckons them to the barricades. We often hear of the sacrifices made in the cause of freedom, but no sacrifice is as great as that which obliges a person to leave his work in life, the work for which he has an aptitude and a genius, to join the freedom fight. This supreme sacrifice was made by the Maulana, but it would appear

that this great sacrifice did not leave the world of letters and learning impoverished. The books that Maulana Sahib produced are monumental. Among them is the commentary on the Holy Quran. His autobiography, which he had just finished, will soon see the light of day. If he had devoted his life to letters alone and let the stirring events of the Independence movement pass him by, it is possible that his writings, though numerous, might have lacked the maturity and wisdom of a life passed in a strenuous struggle with its elements of suffering and even of tragedy.

Here then was Maulana Sahib, a great divine, a great scholar, a great orator in Urdu, a great fighter for national freedom. With all his fervent love for the country, he was an internationalist at the core. Great as was his contribution to the freedom fight, his memory will live more as a harmonious personality, full of knowledge and wisdom.

It is, therefore, nothing to wonder that the common man instinctively felt a great anxiety when he came to learn about the serious condition of Maulana's health couple of days before his death. The mournful demonstration after his death that was witnessed in Delhi, and the universal sorrow and gloom in which the country was enveloped, showed that the common people, who had but a rare and distant glimpse of him, knew what they had lost a philosopher, friend and guide. It was truly said by his vocal admirers that with him passed away an epoch of Indian history and Indian cultural values which can perhaps never again be recreated. The Maulana was one of the bright gems of this epoch.

*Maulana Abul Kalam Azad A Memorial Volume,*  
1959, edited by Humayun Kabir

## A Resplendent Personality

*Syed Mahmud*

In the jail at Ahmednagar where Maulana Azad, as President of the Indian National Congress, was confined along with his colleagues of the Working Committee, as a result of the adoption of the Quit India resolution in August 1942, I often found him murmuring to himself in a deep undertone a couplet from the Arab poet, Abul Ala Maari, meaning

We are of those for whom there is no middle station in life.  
We occupy the pinnacles or we seek the depths of the grave

Another line also, and this from a Persian poet, had an equal fascination for him in those days

The taste of me may be insipid, but my worth is great,  
I am a fruit grown before the season

The two couplets typify the mind of Maulana Azad. He always stood by himself, as personality apart, and consequently his worth cannot be measured by the common standard. Whatever role he was called upon to fulfil in life, whether as scholar, man of letters, thinker, politician, leader of men, of fighter in the cause of liberty, truth and justice, he lent to it a dignity and poise entirely his own.

It was as one learned in the Islamic lore and as an originator of a new style of expression in Urdu that Maulana Azad first attracted my attention. That was in 1906. I had read some of the essays which he had contributed to his own journal, *Lisan-ul-Sidq* (The Tongue of Truth) and to the *Vakil* of Amritsar. I was then just seventeen years old. So high was the estimation formed of him in my mind that I dared not venture to go to him direct. The interview was sought at Lucknow through an elderly scholar of the time whom I knew, Allama Abdullah Imadi. Prior to my introduction, I had expected to meet in Maulana Azad a venerable personality. But I was taken aback when I had to face a mere youth, more or less my age (he was actually eighteen), of thin physique, rosy cheeks, and starlit eyes, tastefully

dressed, impressively cool and collected in behaviour, and gifted with engaging conversational talents. He appeared to me a Prince come from a fairyland, and not exactly a Maulana. I was not alone in receiving such an amazing impression of him at this time of his life. Even elderly men like the late Maulana Hali, Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Sir Abdul Qader had expressed an equal surprise when they first beheld him at an annual meeting of the *Anjuman-e-Islamia*, Lahore, to which he had been invited. He had been scheduled to address the Anjuman on no less a subject than 'Rationalism in Islam'. The elderly organizers of the meeting who received him were at first under the impression that Maulana Azad, the editor of *Lisan-ul-Sidq*, had sent his son to read out this paper on the subject assigned to him. Their amazement knew no bounds when they were told that it was he who was Abul Kalam.

The second time I met him was in 1908 at Aligarh when he kindly came to visit me in my room at the M A O College. Soon after, I left for England and when I came back to India in 1912, Maulana Azad, as editor of *Al-Hilal*, had already become a name to conjure with. He was heading a powerful political awakening in the land, and he was then twenty-four.

Maulana Azad came of scholarly family of Delhi. Born at Mecca while his father was in exile there, and educated on the return of his parents to India, in the traditional Islamic lore at the Madrasas of Calcutta, he had an opportunity to go round the countries of West Asia even while he was a youth. At Cairo, where he stayed for some time, he imbibed the spirit of the reformatory movement which had been launched by Syed Jamaluddin Afghani and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh. The former was the leader of a powerful Pan-Islamic movement intent on the emancipation of the West Asian countries from the imperialistic hold, particularly of Britain. It was the influence of these two great scholars which stimulated the mind of the young Abul Kalam to inaugurate a like movement in his own country.

From the very day of its inception, *Al-Hilal* had pitted itself against the retention of British power in India, and that was not an easy thing to do for any journal in the atmosphere of the times, particularly for one started by a member of the minority community which had doggedly been denied Governmental favours since the days of the Indian Revolution of 1857. The policy of divide-and-rule had reached its climax by the time *Al-Hilal* appeared on the scene, so much so that the Muslims of India had developed the mood to placate the British government in every possible way and receive favours at their hands. To rouse such a people to action against the British authorities in the land was, on the face of it, a vain venture. But the young editor of the journal felt otherwise. He realized that it was only in moments of depression, such as existed at the time in India, that mighty energies could be released for heroic deeds, and he sounded his trumpet call.

There comes in the history of nations a time when the desire to



live becomes a sin, and there is no greater sin than to live on. At such a time, the number of those behind high walls and iron bars increases and the trade of the ironmonger splendidly thrives. Ropes hang on the branches of trees, and wooden planks are aloft for the sons of Adam to walk on to their doom. Such a day comes only to usher in another day, when the seed sown by executions puts forth the fruit of a living and abiding life.

That was the tempo of *Al-Hilal* when it was started, and Maulana wrote:

My resolve is not to seek a task, but to seek first men to do it. In this world, there never was any lack of tasks. But there has always been a dearth of men to undertake them. The present age is an age of wars. All round us are hosts of enemies, and there is not a single corner where armours do not ring. So, there is no lack of fields for action. Those who possess the spirit of a soldier and the courage of a hero must come out to face life as they find it and face its trials. I assert once again that there is no lack of tasks. What we really lack among us are patriots and fighters.

The call of Maulana was heard throughout the country. The Balkan war with its tragic consequences to the Muslims abroad afforded occasion for action. It roused the readers of *Al-Hilal* to a frenzied state of mind to pull down the edifice of British imperialism in the land, and I for my part could not help being caught by the wave of emotion which passed over us at the time.

It was, again, at Lucknow that I next met Maulana. The occasion was the meeting of the Foundation Committee appointed by the Muslim Educational Conference at Aligarh to set up a Muslim university at Aligarh. This was the time when the reputation of *Al-Hilal* was at its highest, and Maulana was being looked upon as the soldier of freedom *par excellence*. The meeting was held at the Baradari of Qaisar Bagh. The moment he entered the hall, cries were raised from every corner of it that he should address them. Those who had already made up their mind to support the acceptance of the terms of the Government did not feel comfortable at the thought of Maulana making any speech at all at the meeting. But the cry was incessant; and when he did speak, the feeling against the motion grew so intense among the audience that it was resolved that the terms offered be rejected. The speech signified an emphatic divergence from the Aligarh attitude in politics. Maulana was of the decided opinion that the Muslims of India should give up altogether their profession of loyalty to the British Government and release their mind to express itself boldly in favour of freedom from its age-long domination.

*Al-Hilal* naturally could not be tolerated by the British authorities in the country. The story of its suspension and the starting of *Al-Balagh* and of

its suspension also is well-known, as also the story of Maulana's prolonged internment at Ranchi. It was a period of hard experiences and firm resolves. So, when he came out of Ranchi in the year 1920, he took to an intensely active political life. In the pages of *Al-Hilal*, he had already powerfully advanced the view that the solution of the Muslim problem in India lay in a hearty co-operation in politics with their Hindu brethren. But after Ranchi, this became an obsession with him.

That was the time when Mahatma Gandhi entered the political arena in India. Maulana met him for the first time during that year at Delhi. The occasion was the assemblage of Hindu and Muslim leaders to consider the question of forming a joint deputation to wait upon the Viceroy. The manner in which Maulana Azad opposed the move and recommended instead absolute non-cooperation with the British Government was so well appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi that a bond of lasting friendship was forged at once between the two mighty minds. From 1920 till Mahatma's tragic death in 1948, the two marched hand in hand together to victory.

The period (1920-1947) was one of strenuous struggle against British imperialism. It began with the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement. The march for freedom was marked by repeated incarceration of the two leaders and their colleagues and co-workers. But it ended in the disappearance of the British Empire in India. Unfortunately, the freedom gained was not of the type the two leaders had dreamt of. It was accompanied by sorrow and suffering and the partition of the country. An account of this lengthy ordeal does not appropriately fall within the purview of the subject assigned to me in this volume. It will be dealt with by others. I may only refer to an episode in this epic struggle which may throw light on the personality of the Maulana. I refer to his arrest along with C.R. Das, and his subsequent trial in Calcutta in 1921, which elicited a statement from him addressed to the Court which should form a distinct chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom.

This document, which he addressed to the presiding Judge, was in Urdu and was subsequently published under the title of *Quol-e-Faisal* or Final Verdict. I quote from this a few brief passages just to show of what stuff Maulana was made.

How befitting it would be if the cup-bearer stigmatizes me of  
drunkenness;  
For my cup still smells of the drink I took last night  
Praise be to God Unique.

I had no intention to give any verbal or written statement here. This is a place where we have neither any hopes to cherish, nor any desires to wish, nor even any complaints to make. This is only a turnstile without passing through which we cannot reach our



destination. Therefore, for a short while, we are obliged to break our journey here. Had it not been so, we would have gone straightaway to jail.

History bears witness that whenever the ruling class took up arms against freedom and truth, the lawcourts served as the most convenient and unfailing weapons for them. . Next to battlefields, the greatest acts of injustice in the world have been committed in the lawcourts. Right from the revered founders of religions, to those who have laboured in the field of science to bring comfort to human life, there was no noble group of men who were not produced as criminals before the courts of unjust governments. I admit that the terrible Roman courts of the second century, or the mysterious inquisitions of the Middle Ages do not exist any more. But I am not prepared to admit that human nature in our times has been purged of the emotions under which those courts worked..

I confess that I have used similar or even more emphatic language not merely in the two speeches under review, but in several other speeches as well which I have had to deliver during the course of the last two years. To speak in that strain is an imperative duty for me, and I cannot desist from discharging it simply because of the threat that it would be regarded a crime under Section 124-A. I want to repeat that language even now, and will go on repeating it so long as I can talk. And if I do not do so, I shall consider myself guilty of a heinous crime.

I believe that liberty is the birthright of every nation and individual. No man, nor any man-made bureaucracy, possesses the right to enslave human beings. Howsoever attractive the names that we may coin for slavery, slavery will remain slavery all the same. It is imposed on man by man against the will of God. Therefore, I refuse to accept the present government as a rightful government, and consequently think it to be a national, religious and human duty to relieve my country and nation of their servitude.

I am a Muslim, and, as such, my religious duty is the same. Islam does not recognize any autocracy or bureaucracy. It came in to restore the lost freedom of humanity, the freedom which had been confiscated by kings, foreign governments, selfish religious leaders, and powerful elements of society. The autocrats thought that might was right; but Islam proclaimed from its very birth that might was not right. It swept off all racial and national distinctions and showed the world at large that all human beings held an equal rank, and all possessed equal rights. It proclaimed that excellence did not lie in race, nationality or colour. It was only righteous action which counted, and the noblest among men was he who did his work most righteously.

Such was the charter of human rights issued eleven hundred years before the French Revolution. It was not a mere pronouncement, but a practical order of life which was set up, and which, in the words of the historian Gibbon, "has no equal".

In this world, "evil" like "good" desires to live. However much we may dislike 'evil', we cannot condemn its urge to live. The struggle for survival between the two has already begun in India, and this is by no means an extraordinary phenomenon. If in the eyes of bureaucracy it is a crime to struggle for freedom and righteousness and those, who in the name of justice are out to put an end to their unjustified presence in the land, are to be regarded as criminals and punished, then I confess that I am a criminal. I am one of those who have sown the seed of this crime in the heart of the people, and have devoted their whole life to water the plant. I am the first among the Muslims of India to invite in 1920, the entire nation to indulge in this crime, and have within three years roused in them the urge to come out of the maze in which the craftiness of the Government had wilfully kept them.

My firm conviction is that I should preach this gospel as a matter of sacred duty. I cannot abstain from discharging it simply because Section 124-A terms it a crime. Even now, I say what I have said before, and will go on repeating it so long as I have any breath left in me.

The concluding paragraph of this document while asking the Judge to make haste in winding up the proceedings, ends with these words:

My Magistrate !

I shall not take any more time of the Court. It is a very interesting and instructive chapter of history which we both are equally busy in preparing. While I get the criminals' dock, to you comes the magisterial seat, but I admit that for this work your seat is as important as this dock. Come then, let us finish quickly this memorable act which is soon to become a legend. The historian is watching us. Allow me to occupy this place repeatedly, and you may also go on writing your judgments as often. The process will continue for some time, and then the gates of another court will open wide. That will be the Court of the Lord where Time will act as Judge. It will pass the Judgment, and that will be the final Judgment.

And praise be to God in the beginning and in the end.

The words have a prophetic ring about them. In his very lifetime, the gates of God's Court were thrown open, and he heard the judgment delivered by Time to which he had pointed.

It was during the first phase of Maulana's active political life after his

release from Ranchi that I decided to work with him. Once the decision was taken, I cheerfully went through the mill with him and others till the light of freedom came to us and the country at large.

To speak of the personality of Maulana is not easy. He was a man of many parts. The world knows him by his scholarship and by the tremendous sacrifices which he made for his country. But the distinguishing qualities of his mind and heart were such that only those who had intimate connection with him could know. I may refer here to but a few qualities which have left a deep impression on my mind.

Maulana had inherited the great respect in which his family had been held. Thousands of Muslims in Bengal loved him as the son of a great religious *Pir*. When his father died in 1909, his huge following came to acclaim Maulana Azad as his successor and offered *nazars* or gifts. Maulana would not accept the *nazars*. He said that these gifts, which were mostly in the form of money presents, should go back to the poorer among their families, and he adhered to this attitude throughout his life. In the most trying moments of life, he would not communicate even to the most intimate of his friends that he was in straitened circumstances. Whatever came to him through his own exertion he shared with the less fortunate around him even in the days of his Ministership. He was averse to keeping anything for himself for the morrow. The old proverb held good in his case. The left hand did not know what the right hand gave away. He was very unhappy when he was reminded by anyone of the favours received at his hands.

Another trait which distinguished Maulana was his aversion to speaking harshly of those who had shown harshness to him in life. Everyone knows how a section of the Muslims always treated him for his criticism of the weaknesses which had crept into Islam and which a good many Muslims cherished as religion. Never once did he answer the gibes levelled at him. Mr. Jinnah's behaviour towards him is well-known, but never for a moment would he think of retaliating. I remember the great meeting that was held in Lucknow after the partition. Even those Muslims who had derided Maulana in the pre-partition days had come to realize how mistaken they were in their political attitude. They were present at the gathering. So, when Maulana came to address the huge concourse, almost everyone expected that he would take the occasion to condemn Mr. Jinnah and tear to pieces the policy which he had pursued resulting in unhappiness to so many, but he would not condemn anyone. The very first words which came out of his mouth were, "I have not come here to condemn anyone. What was to have happened, has happened. We have now to think of the future." The words created a deep impression on the audience. They realized that Maulana was made of a moral texture worthy of the really great. Never in his lifetime did he ever speak a harsh word about Mr. Jinnah. If by chance old memories were revived for him,

he would simply say with a sigh "Why expose the scar on one's own heart No one is to blame I alone am to blame I was so incompetent that I could not succeed in keeping back the Muslims of India from committing deliberate suicide "

Another quality of the mind of Maulana which impressed me immensely was his versatility Whatever the subject of discussion in any private gathering or conversation, dealing with literature, philosophy religion, politics or science, whether of the East or of the West, he used to take a scholarly interest and offer comments such as only those deeply conversant therewith could offer He had a prodigious memory and could recite appropriate lines from poetry and narrate with ease and precision events forgotten long ago

Maulana was a hard worker Whatever task was entrusted to him, he would throw himself into it with zeal, and sometimes he over-worked himself And whatever moments of leisure he could snatch from the work in hand, he would occupy himself with reading some new work that came out of the press dealing with subjects of interest to him It is not well-known that through his self-study he had acquired a remarkable proficiency in the English language such as enabled him to be in touch with the latest thought in science, literature, philosophy and politics So obsessed was he with his work and his reading that it was with the greatest reluctance that he would agree to give interviews to visitors People attributed this to lack of courtesy But the fact is that he had no taste for idle talk Whenever he thought that something good would result to anyone or to the country at large, he would readily consent to give interviews to those who sought them

One great quality of Maulana was the quickness with which he would get at the marrow of things He could sift the dross from the gold with the facility of an adept That was the quality which impressed all those who had the opportunity to work with him On occasions of deliberations in huge gatherings when confusion prevailed in thought due to conflicting ways of approach to the problem at issue, the mind of Maulana would concentrate on the essentials and find a way out agreeable to the contending parties. He would never lose his head in the midst of tumult and disorder, but coolly and with firmness collect the minds around him to think through the problem on certain definite lines, and help them to reach a solution such as the occasion demanded That was why even while he was in his 'twenties he was called upon by venerable heads like Shaikh-ul-Hind of Deoband and Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangimahal to preside over the meetings of the Khilafat conferences, and that was why he was called upon at the age of thirty-five, by grey-headed politicians and literary geniuses like Pandit Motilal Nehru, C R. Das, Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali and Dr Ansari, to be the President of the Indian National Congress

One supreme quality in him which distinguished him from all others

was the firmness of his resolve. He took decisions after cool and careful deliberation, and once he took a decision he adhered to it with such tenacity that no one could prevail upon him to budge from his position. It was this peculiarity in him that the late Maulana Mohammad Ali used to designate as 'stubbornness'.

From the time he started his *Al-Hilal*, one supreme idea functioned in his mind rendering every activity of his subservient to it, and that was the freedom of his country to be achieved through Hindu-Muslim unity. His emphasis was on unity more than on freedom, for his belief was that freedom was bound to come one day. He said:

If an angel were to descend from the high heavens and proclaim from the heights of the Qutab Minar, "Discard Hindu-Muslim unity and within twenty-four hours Swaraj is yours", I will refuse the proffered Swaraj, but will not budge an inch from my stand. The refusal of Swaraj will affect only India while the end of our unity will be the loss of the entire human world.

That was exactly the attitude of Gandhiji on the question of unity and freedom. In the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements, Maulana felt he was witnessing the fulfilment of his dreams but the developments which followed were a source of immense disquietude to him. There arose around him deep and forbidding darkness, the darkness pained his sensitive soul, but he doggedly steered his way through it to destiny. Neither constant persecution by the authorities, nor the ever-mounting tirades of his own brethren, and a bitter Jinnah, could deter him from his purpose. He would not compromise with evil.

Maulana's passionate calls were not heeded. The differences between the two communities multiplied as time went on, ending in the catastrophe of 1947. I know what that meant to Maulana. Every dagger one Indian thrust into the body of another was a dagger thrust into his own soul. He bore the agony in silence, but resolutely set his mind to the task of rebuilding India on new foundations. The foresight and the wisdom which he brought to bear on the task and the magnificent manner in which he lent his co-operation to his colleagues in the Government to steady the course of the country in moments of crisis, will not easily be forgotten by all concerned. In fact, this was borne out by the wave of sorrow that passed through every Indian heart when he suddenly passed away in the early hours of 22 February 1958.

Now that he has gone, his greatness has all of a sudden been recognised by one and all. When I say this, I do not mean that in his lifetime he was not regarded as great or respected as such. Had it been otherwise, I dare say, he would not have been elected twice as the President of the All India National Congress, nor entrusted with a pivotal position in the delicate negotiations which were carried on in the final days

of India's struggle for freedom. In truth he was great from the first to the last. He was destined to be among those great sons of India whose function it was to cheer us in moments of despair, to guide us, to show us the way, to lead us on, to solve our problems, and add authority to our decisions. I know that his inner loneliness and his characteristic reserve were at times liable to be misunderstood. But this reserve was only a way to conserve his energy for potent expression in moments of dire need. In the death of Maulana, we have lost a part of our own selves. India has lost not only a great and illustrious son but a great friend and a wise leader. But we have to bear the loss, and undeterred by the ephemeral discomforts of the day, pursue his ideal, the ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity for which Mahatma Gandhi laid down his life, and for which Maulana Azad lived till his last moments.

*Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume,*  
1961, edited by Humayun Kabir

# Philosophy of Education

*Khwaja Ghulamus Saiyidain*

Maulana Azad was one of the finest products of Islamic culture. He was educated in his childhood and youth, according to the old educational pattern, by eminent scholars and divines, in Urdu, Persian and Arabic languages and literature, Islamic theology, philosophy, metaphysics and other traditional subjects, finishing the whole course by the time he was barely sixteen years of age — an intellectual feat which still remains unsurpassed! He became, in due course, one of the greatest scholars, if not the greatest scholar, of his generation in Islamic theology, religion and philosophy. His commentary on the Quran entitled *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is not only his immortal *magnum opus* but also the most outstanding contemporary interpretation of the teachings of Islam as mirrored through an exceptionally lucid and rational mind. A study of his educational ideas, which draw their inspiration basically from that source, can give us a glimpse, may be an insight, into the values of his cultural heritage and thus contribute to an enriched understanding of India's characteristically assimilative and hospitable cultural genius.

Let me not, however, convey to you the impression that Azad's mind was exclusively an "Islamic" mind or even an "oriental" mind, unacquainted with, or insensitive to, the rich streams of influences emanating from other sources. He was equally appreciative of, and conversant with, other aspects of his cultural heritage - the Indian heritage and the total modern heritage of the age which cuts across the East-West barriers.

One of his most moving pronouncements on the relationship between his Muslim heritage and his Indian heritage was made many years ago in the course of his Presidential Address at the Ramgarh Session of the Indian National Congress. No translation can do justice to the beauty, the sincerity, and the faith pulsating through the original Urdu, of which he was an accomplished master. I would, however, like to share this quotation with you in translation because it throws light not only on the communal problem, the problem of the relationship between the



majority and the minorities, but also, though indirectly, on the important educational problems which we have to face in forging a living sense of unity in this great country of religious and cultural diversities

I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious traditions of the last thirteen hundred years. I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy. The history and teachings of Islam, its arts and letters, its civilization and culture are part of my wealth and it is my duty to cherish and guard them. As a Muslim I have a special identity within the field of religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any undue interference with it. But, with all these feelings, I have another equally deep realization, born out of my life's experience, which is strengthened and not hindered by the spirit of Islam. I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total make-up without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete. I can never give up this sincere claim.

This confession of faith brings out the fact that Azad did not care for the typical mind of the 'mulla' or the priest, but had cultivated an infinitely rich and catholic mind which had drawn generously and creatively on many sources—Indian and Islamic, oriental and occidental. While retaining the basic heritage of Islamic values and the creative originality of his mind, he had assimilated the best that ancient Indian religion and philosophy as well as modern Western thought had to offer.

One's view of the concept and purpose of education is eventually derived from one's view of the meaning and purpose of life. That is, if one has a thoughtful and creative mind and one's educational ideas are not a confused reflection of what one finds floating about amorphously in one's environment. This may, perhaps, account for the fact that significant educational thinkers have generally come not from the rank of professional educationists i.e., persons trained in educational theory and practice to become teachers at different levels, but from philosophers, sociologists, social workers, men of letters and others who have done creative work of value, in some important realm of thought or action. They have often presented us with rewarding and explosive ideas; the professional educationists have later given them acceptable form and "respectability" and worked out their practical implications. These original thinkers were primarily preoccupied with problems of life, individual and social, and were concerned, in some way or another, about enriching it with significance, rather than being directly concerned with educational practice. Neither Plato nor Rousseau nor Freud nor Montessori nor Spenser nor Tagore nor Gandhi nor Iqbal can be described as professional



educationists. Yet their impact on education has been immense, directly or indirectly. They helped to initiate important educational movements which drew inspiration from their basic philosophy of life and thus theirs have become honoured names in educational history.

As an educationist, Azad occupies a somewhat similar position. He was essentially a scholar, a man of thought, a litterateur, a divine, who found himself pitch-forked into a life of intense political activity and who, amazingly enough, was able to combine the exacting and almost mutually exclusive demands of the life of the mind and his life of intense political activity - a rare quality which he shared with his life-long friend and colleague, Nehru. He read extensively, how extensively, only those can imagine who were privileged, occasionally, to glimpse into the range and the profundity of his mind. I have some times heard him hold forth, with rare mastery of detail, on the most unexpected topics which seemed to be far removed from the umbra of his interests, fluently citing authorities and documents as if that was the special field of his lifelong study! Reading, however, is not enough. Many persons read extensively but their mind is at best a miscellaneous storehouse of facts and unrelated ideas. Azad had a thoughtful mind which not only assimilated what it took in but established illuminating inter-connections between apparently unrelated facts and principles gathered from different fields and disciplines. This is what distinguishes the creative from the mechanical mind. His deep study of Islamic thought as well as the whole range of Eastern and Western philosophy was transmuted, by his luminous mind, into a philosophy of life and a pattern of values which inspired both his intellect and his personal and public conduct. His loyalty to these values, tested in the fiery crucible of public life, spread over about fifty years, and it emerged from this ordeal pure and unsullied as gold. This was one of the main reasons why the influence of his personality was so widespread and powerful. People felt, when he talked of certain values and standards, that he not only knew what he was talking about but was preaching what he had practised in his life. This is one of the most essential qualities of a true teacher, in any sense of the word. Hypocrisy is at a severe discount in the teacher's domain. Respect must enter into the basic relationship between the teacher and his community of learners in order to create a receptive frame of mind, and hypocrisy can never coexist with genuine respect. This accounts for the respect in which he was held not only by his friends and admirers but even by his opponents.

### **The Situation that Azad Faced**

This was the kind of intellectual background and an experience of men and affairs, gained through leadership in the fields of religion, journalism and politics which he brought to his work as Education Minister. Frankly, when the announcement was first made, I felt a little surprised, because,

to my mind, the personal standing of Azad was far above that of any Ministerial post and I could not very well imagine him, the intellect and conscience of the nation, holding any portfolio in an official hierarchy. But this was really due to my ignorance, and, perhaps, my unconscious equation of Ministership in free India with similar posts in the British regime I have learnt since how important and crucial can be a Minister's role in the building up of a nation and how his personal quality can make all the difference to the success of national effort in his particular field.

These early years of freedom were crucial for a variety of reasons and a bad or wrong choice of the first Education Minister of free India could have been fraught with serious consequences. Although the battle for political freedom had been won, the country was passing through a most trying spiritual and psychological crisis. At the end of a predominantly non-violent political revolution, which prided itself on being bloodless, the country had a baptism of blood which poisoned centuries' old fraternal relations between the communities. The struggle for freedom which had drawn together many diverse elements was over, and now the many fissiparous tendencies, temporarily driven underground, had come to the surface. In spite of Gandhiji's mission, which was in essence educational, the numerous petty differences, based on language, caste, creed and geography, were having their day and the sense of national unity was threatened in this holocaust. The situation was made much worse by the fact that most people were beginning to behave as if the period of making sacrifices was over and it was time to reap the profits of freedom in the form of the loaves and fishes of office and other opportunities to exercise patronage and make money. Freedom had been won but where were the clean hands and the pure hearts through which alone can the eternal vigil for freedom be exercised? Above all, there was no clear-cut social ideology on which the various sections of the people could be united. In almost every field of national activity, there was a clash between forces of progress and reaction, between the desire to go forward with courage and a hankering after the past, between enlightenment and obscurantism. The issues were, of course, not so clear-cut, life is too complex to yield itself to such simplicities of stark alternatives. But broadly, there was a division between those who welcomed modern science and technology and believed in a policy of synthesis between the East and the West, as also between the various elements of Indian culture, and those who believed that we would do well to shut the doors and windows of our hearts and minds to new ideas and influences and recreate the pattern of a vanished social order and outmoded social values. Of this latter school, one could say, as was said of the Liberals of England in the early twentieth century, that they were only prepared to "move backwards fearfully into the future lest something worse should befall them!"

This was the complicated and discouraging situation inherited by us at

the dawn of freedom. While the country had, undoubtedly, to face numerous material problems of great urgency — food production, rehabilitation of refugees, fighting floods and epidemics, setting up an adequate administrative machinery, building up industries — I think it can well be claimed that its basic problem was, and still is, educational and psychological. I say so not because of my particular concern with this aspect of national effort but because, in the cold light of objective analysis, this is the truth of the matter. In a country emerging from a century and a half of political bondage, with its unsavoury impact on the thinking and the morale of the people, it is of the first importance that the nation should set about re-educating its heart and mind. It is not enough that it should grow more food, build more houses, rehabilitate its refugees and establish new industries. It is even more imperative that it should train the personnel to undertake these great projects - train them not merely in the needed skills but also train their ideas and emotions in new ways and under the inspiration of a new purpose so that they may prove humanly equal to their new challenges and responsibilities. What is of even greater urgency is the psychological reconditioning of the people to transcend their narrow loyalties, their outworn ideas and their superstitions, and to learn to work together in the service of great, common purposes. If this is not done, all the grandiose schemes of agricultural and industrial progress will come to grief. And, as I have indicated and as the history of the last decade alarmingly demonstrates, unlovely tendencies of sectionalism, casteism and sectarianism will inevitably raise their head and threaten the whole edifice of liberty and social justice. In fact, if the vision and the courage of a few leaders at the top, who were imbued with the spirit and the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi, had not stood out against this danger, the shape of things in India would have been very different indeed.

Azad was a distinguished member of a small, select band of national leaders. Looking back in retrospect, one realises how wise and far-sighted was his appointment as Education Minister. There was need for a person of great vision and character who may be able to assess the situation correctly and adopt sound educational policies which would help, in the long run, to restore mental sanity and balance to national life and instil the right values in it. Azad was eminently fitted for this task. Ever since his advent into public life, he was essentially concerned with the basic educational problem of shaping the hearts and minds of his fellow men and women. With all the unusual gifts of his mind and his powerful writings and oratory, he devoted himself to the service of his great purpose; the training of individuals who will have the qualities of vision, courage, tolerance and integrity, and to the creation, through them, and for them, of a social order which will be inspired by the ideals of social justice, co-operation, broad-mindedness and rationalism. Repeatedly he affirmed in his speeches that the central purpose of our Five Year Plans

is not the production of more material wealth and resources but the creation of a new mind and a new character for which right education is more important than the development of agriculture, industries, trade or hydro-electric projects. So, when he stepped from public life into Education Ministership, he was not taking on a new job but a new challenge how to translate into concrete, organizational terms some of the ideas and values which he had preached all his life

### **Azad's Concept of Man and His Destiny**

We can divide the discussion of Azad's contribution to education under two broad categories. First, a study of his general educational ideas as derived from his basic philosophy of life which involves, among other things, an analysis of his concept of man, his destiny and his place in the Universe. Second, the various educational changes and measures of reconstruction which were attempted during his regime with the object of making education adequately responsive to the needs and challenges of national life. These will form the theme of the second Lecture. I do not know to what extent it is possible at this stage to assess correctly the relationship between these two aspects. Of course, there can never be a point-to-point correspondence between theory and practice. Practice is always trying to catch up with progressive theory but can never quite manage to do so, while intelligent practice, in its turn, modifies theory and makes it more responsive to realistic conditions. Moreover, in dealing with the problem of education in a country like India, with a population of over 400 millions, an educational administrator cannot afford to build the educational system only on the foundations of his personal philosophy but must take into account the numerous social, psychological and material factors operating in it and carry the general consensus of public and professional opinion with him. Azad, too, had to function in that decisive and determining context. But, if an educational administrator or Minister is unable to put the stamp of his personality on the administration as well as the broad purposes and ideology of national education, he cannot be regarded as having made an effective contribution. He must certainly feel the force and the direction of the current and take it into consideration but need not necessarily swim with it. I hope to be able to indicate that there is an important link between Azad's educational vision and his educational policy and programmes, and, though the two do not obviously coincide, Indian education should broadly move in the direction of approximating more closely with that vision.

As our starting point in this study, we will take up the question, what, according to Azad, is the place of man in the economy of Nature? What is the purpose of his life? What are the values for which he must strive at his best? What is the pattern of his destiny as it emerges from the writings

and speeches of Azad? While this issue is discussed by him indirectly in many of his writings and there are frequent references to it in his commentary on the Quran, it is presented systematically and with his usual lucidity and brilliance, in the Inaugural Address which he gave at the Unesco Symposium in Delhi (1951) on the "Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in the East and West." In this Address he has analysed the basic approach of the East and the West to this problem of understanding man. He recognises, at the outset, as many other thoughtful persons have done, that in this matter there is no basic, irreconcilable antithesis between them. I recall that many years ago, in the early thirties, there was a controversy between the great Indian poet, Iqbal and the distinguished Turkish writer, Khalida Khanam Adib, who had postulated in her Lectures a basic dualism between the East and the West. Iqbal had differed emphatically from that view and pointed out that the lines of philosophic cleavage do not run along longitudes but are ideological. Tagore had taken a similar position and rejected Kipling's cryptic prophecy that "The twain (East and West) shall never meet" Likewise, Azad argued, there was a great deal of common ground and large areas of agreement between them:

Man all over the world has adopted common methods of reasoning and thought..... Human feelings are largely similar. Their attitudes towards the unknown mysteries of existence are also broadly alike. The Greeks, who looked with admiration and awe upon the peaks of the Olympus, shared the same feelings as the Indians who meditated in the valleys of the Himalayas and looked upon its eternal snows.<sup>1</sup>

It, therefore, naturally follows that man's way of looking at himself and the world should be largely the same in different parts of the world. Having made this point, he goes on to indicate that there are certain important differences of emphasis between them which we should study with sympathy in order to form a broad and comprehensive picture of man in his natural and social setting. He cites the example of three civilizations, two from the East and one from the West, to illustrate his point: India, China and Greece. In Indian philosophy, the point of emphasis has been mainly the inner experience of man, and, in this search, it has penetrated below the regions of sense and intellect and "Sought to assert the identity of man with a deep, hidden reality", which transcends all visible, material phenomena. From this starting point it has derived the idea of "man's intrinsic spirituality" which is mirrored in the teachings of the various schools of Sufi and Vedantic thought. Man, according to them, should not be regarded as only a material entity but as an "Emanation of God",

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: 1947-1955*, Publications Division, p. 179.  
All references to his speeches are from this volume.

as “The highest manifestation of God’s being”. Bhagwad Gita describes him as “The Imperishable, the Supreme to be realized, the undying guardian of the Eternal law, the Primal Person”, while the Sufis describe him variously “As a wave of the boundless Sea, a ray of the Sun that is God, a moment in the being of the Eternal.”<sup>2</sup> No understanding of the Indian view will be complete which does not appreciate this basic approach.

In China, the preoccupation of the thinkers has been not so much with man’s inner nature as with the study of his relations with his fellows, with defining very meticulously the finesse of these relationships which form the basis of all ethical conduct. On the other hand, Greek philosophy, which is the fountain-head of Western thought, was not concerned primarily with man’s inner nature or his social relations but with understanding Nature and the immensity of the world outside and with determining the place of man in it. Since the advent of Aristotle, at any rate, reflection was centred more on what man does, on his activities in the world here and now than on what man is. In course of time, as Azad puts it, “This positive, empirical and scientific attitude became the prevailing climate of thought in the West.” Progress based on reason became its professed creed. As a result of the phenomenal progress which science has made in the last century - and which it continues to make with intellectually staggering rapidity in our lifetime-the Western mind has developed a somewhat arrogant faith in its “unfailing efficacy”. As the triumph of science was mainly in the world of matter, the scientific temper has also tended to become increasingly materialistic, leading to the belief that the methods of science could be applied to all fields, physical and mental, and there was no reality beyond the physical reality which the mind of man could, or need, explore. The three most powerful influences which have shaped Western thought in this direction have been those of Darwin, Marx and Freud. Azad sums up their contribution tersely in these words - though the statement naturally suffers from the limitation of all brief statements - “Darwin sought to establish that man is descended from animals, while Marx argued that his mentality is largely the result of his material environment. Freud went a step further and taught that not only is man descended from animals but his mentality retains even today traces of his animal origin.”<sup>3</sup> Thus man came to be viewed in the West, increasingly, as “a progressive animal.” Thanks to the prestige which the West has won through its economic and political domination over the East, this attitude has also influenced the development of contemporary thought in Eastern countries.

Thus, while there are bridges here and there between these two views of man, one viewing him as a progressive animal, and the other as an

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<sup>2</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, p. 180.



emanation from God-bridges built by Christian thinkers, scholastics, mystics and philosophers — there is a considerable difference of emphasis between them and, consequently, they also differ in defining the kind of training and education that can meet the essential needs of his being. If man is to be viewed merely as a “progressive animal”, he will use the great resources of science and technology mainly for the achievement of objectives which have their roots in his animal nature and instincts. If, on the other hand, he shares, however humbly, in the attributes of the Divine, “Equip yourselves with the attributes of Allah”, as the Prophet of Islam enjoined - science itself may become an instrument for the realization of “God’s will on earth” and paving the way towards a life dedicated to peace, goodwill and human welfare. The East does not believe that science, which has torn asunder veil after veil from the hidden face of Nature and pried open its jealously guarded secrets, can also succeed in unveiling the lineaments of man himself. “The mirror that man has fashioned reflects all aspects of the world but not his own inner self.” Azad points out:

That man cannot achieve a satisfactory solution to the problems of the individual, the community, the nation or of international relations, until he knows clearly the nature of his own self and determines what the place of man is in the vastness of the Universe.<sup>4</sup>

Azad’s own concept of man draws its inspiration from the general trend of Eastern thought, and, in particular, from the teachings of Islam which regard man as definitely superior to other earthly creatures, as not only created in the image of God and, “Potentially imbued with the qualities which find their perfect embodiment in Him but also as His vice-regent on earth.” He thus becomes an instrument for working out His increasing purpose. In Greek philosophy, knowledge of self is a categorical imperative: “Know Thyself”. Islam went a step further by making it a necessary pre-condition to the knowledge of God Himself.

*Man arafa nafsahu faqad arafa rabbahu*  
He who knows himself knows God

This is so because man is the microcosm in whom is mirrored the whole macrocosm. In the words of Ali, earliest of Islamic thinkers,

Thy disease is in thee but thou knowest not !  
Thy medicine, too, is in thee and thou knowest not!  
Thou thinkest thyself to be a small organism  
While in thee is contained the whole Universe !

At this point, Azad draws our attention to a significant paradox which characterizes the current situation in the West and the East. The West, in

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<sup>4</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, p. 119

spite of its materialism and its theoretical belief in determinism, did not, in practice, adopt the attitude of fatalism, the belief that man's destiny is pre-ordained. It made science its guide - science which is dynamic, forward looking, impatient of intellectual chains - and by applying it to the solution of many obstinate material and social problems, led the way to the creation of a new and better social order. A social order which it hoped might provide a fuller opportunity of development for individuals in an atmosphere of prosperity, freedom and increasing social justice. There is food for thought in this achievement for the Eastern peoples who pride themselves on their spirituality and their high sense of the dignity of man. In the East, the story and the paradox are different. The East viewed man mainly through the attractive glasses of Vedanta and Sufism and saw him cloaked in his spirituality, as a part of the eternal flow of divinity. According to this view, it is the veil of ignorance, covering the eyes of the ordinary man, which makes him regard himself as separate from God. In reality, he is not just an animal who has traversed many stages of evolution but in him is reflected the glory that is God. This concept is based on an "Imperative vision of the divine is man" and, according to it, "Education can have no higher purpose than to develop the divine even in a plebian, and thus open up before him an infinite future."<sup>5</sup> It was here, however, that according to Azad, the East tripped. While it recognized man's high status, it was not able to free the mind of man from the bonds of fatalism. If man is an "Emanation of God," whatever he does, it may be unwarily assumed, is God's doing and whatever happens to him is due to the will of God. This is a thought trap in which man may well come to regard himself as "A mere toy in the hands of fate!" When such an attitude takes root in the mind of a society, it leads to the wrong belief that the manifestations of human suffering and misery, which dog our footsteps, are not real or of any great significance - they are just imaginary shadows on the canvas of Maya! This might well lead to an insensitiveness to human suffering and deprivation, and dull the keen edge of the desire for human progress. Man can ill afford to fix his gaze so intently on the stars that he ignores the evils, injustices, and limitations in which his mortal life is cast.

This close relationship, this interdependence of the world here and the world hereafter is an essential facet of Islamic thought. "This life is the sowing ground for the life hereafter". What we sow here we will have to reap there; we cannot run away from it! One of the most often-repeated prayers in Islam is "O Lord, give us the good things in this life and in the life hereafter". This is not, if I may so put it, an expression of "greed" but a recognition of the fact that we must simultaneously strive for both. The ascetic approach regards the world of flesh and matter as a snare which man must endeavour to avoid at all cost. This view Azad does not accept

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<sup>5</sup> Iqbal *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 184



in spite, or rather because, of his deeply religious temper. He believed that according to the revolutionary declaration of the Quran, God has created all the infinite treasures of the earth and the sky for man's exploitation and use, provided he does so in a spirit of fairness and moderation and for the service of worthy social ends. He invites us to look for grace and salvation not in the denial but the reconstruction of the social order on just and rational lines. Hence his acceptance of modern science and technology which are essential factors in any such reconstruction. But he is careful to point out, like many others who have given thought to this problem, that wealth and power by themselves lead to unscrupulousness in social dealings. They are valuable only if they can be 'humanized' and utilised as means for the patterning of the good life. What religion opposes is not the enjoyment of life and its great and varied triumphs but exclusive absorption in them, the ungodly arrogance and the atrophy of reverence and compassion which often follow as a consequence. The spirit in which we approach the conquest of the world is, therefore, all important. Two conditions are commended as essential for the purpose - the effort we make should be strenuous, whole-hearted and based on the right means, and there should be a living, pulsating faith in God and the moral principles which he has enjoined. With them we can build a bridge between the material and spiritual mansions of the good life, and demonstrate the continuity of social and ethical principles as applied in all the manifold situations of life.

Azad puts the problem in these words:

In both the East and the West, the prevalent systems of education have given rise to various paradoxes. In the East, we find a disproportionate emphasis on individual salvation. Man sought knowledge as a means to his own redemption. The Eastern mode of thought with its pre-occupation with individual salvation has, at times, paid inadequate attention to social welfare and progress. In the West, on the contrary, there has been a greater emphasis on the need for social progress. In fact, considerations of social welfare have at times led to the growth of totalitarian societies in which the individual has been suppressed. Today when East and West have been brought nearer each other through the operations of science, it is necessary that the bias, whether in favour of the individual or of society, should be rectified and a system of education evolved which will give due regard to both individual and social values.

### **Role of Intellect and Revelation**

This raises the whole issue of the place of intellect in life — its importance as well as its limitations. Azad has pointed out that, in the course of ages, man has sought help and guidance through four sources,

three of which are universally recognized, while the fourth has been under dispute between those who believe in God and religion and those who do not. These include Instincts, Senses, Intellect and Revelation. Man shares the first two with other animals and through them he obtains useful knowledge of the world outside and is able to meet his basic needs. In addition, he has the power of Intellect which is able to analyse, to draw conclusions and to form generalizations on the basis of the raw material which the Instincts and Senses provide. Without the guidance of Intellect, instincts and senses may lead man astray by giving him, in all good faith, an incomplete or untrue picture of the world. It is the function of reason to interpret this picture intelligently. Intellect has thus opened out before man unlimited avenues of progress, provided it is used with care and a proper sense of values. In this sense, Azad is a rationalist and his rationalism does not clash with his religion but draws its strength and inspiration from it. Anything that comes in the legitimate way of reason should be rejected, for instance, the blind following of the ancestral ways and mores which acquire an odour of sanctity merely through the passage of time. Such anti-rationalist superstitions and beliefs are described in the Quran as "Mere names which you and your forefathers have forged", which have taken the place of the light of reason and respect for truth. The same stricture is applicable to the conventional, unquestioning obedience rendered by communities to their misguided leaders, rulers and divines in defiance of reason. He describes those who will not use their God-given reason as *Munkir-e-Haq* (Deniers of Truth) which is a very strong indictment. Indeed, "It is God's immutable law", he says, "that if you will not open your eyes, they will be covered, as it were, by a black curtain. If you will not use your ears, you will become like the deaf. If you will refuse to think, the light of reason itself will become dim and obscure"<sup>6</sup>

Azad points out that there are two approaches to reality—complementary, not contradictory, which the seeker for Truth must follow—*Fikr* or looking through the eyes of reason into one's own self and *Zikr* or a careful and intelligent observation of the entire complex and fascinating world around him. The world is spread both in space and time. Not the narrow world of our own community or country but the whole of God's wide world with its infinite variety. Again, not the limited span of our contemporary life only, but the whole life of man, as mirrored in history, depicting the rise and fall of nations under unchanging moral and natural laws. In this way alone can we get a deep and true insight into reality. Even in dealing with religious matters, thinking has its well appointed place - one must exercise *tadabbur*, i.e., go deeply into the meaning of the Quran itself, which is the source of inspiration in Islam. And, of course, he

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<sup>6</sup> *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Volume II, p. 358

commends the same depth of thinking and reverence of approach in relation to other scriptures

Azad graduated into faith - unlike most other divines and theologians - not through the primrose path of inherited beliefs but through the arduous and painfully educative experience of scepticism and disbelief. This is how he describes this spiritual journey in his characteristic style in his book entitled *Tazkirah*

From the very first day I have refused to be content with what my family, my education and my society gave me. I have never been bound by the fetters of tradition in any direction and the thirst for truth has never deserted me. There is no conviction in my heart which the thorns of doubt have not pierced, no faith in my soul which has not been subjected to all the conspiracies of disbeliefs.<sup>7</sup>

But, while he is fully aware of the role of intellect in life, he is also conscious of its limitation and here his predominantly Eastern heritage makes him part company with what has been called the 'over-intellectualism' of the West. This does not, incidentally, represent anything like a rigid parting of the ways between the East and the West, because there are many thinkers and schools of thought in the West fully conscious of these limitations. But, broadly, it is true that the modern scientific, materialistic West is wedded to Intellectualism, while the East has a keener sensitiveness to other, supra-rational avenues to Truth. He points out in his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* that man is apt to go astray in his thinking for two reasons: "He either rejects reason completely, accepts everything uncritically, and blindly follows the beaten path or becomes intellectually so arrogant that he straightway believes anything which his own very limited reason is unable to comprehend - as if the affirmation of Reality were entirely dependent on an individual's capacity to understand it. Both these mental states are opposed to wisdom and both lead to obscurantism and arrest of intellectual progress. The same intellectual acumen which teaches us to distinguish between Truth (*Haqiqat*) and Surmise (*Wahm*), also demands that we should not summarily reject everything which is beyond our personal understanding. The first saves us from obscurantism and allegiance to ignorance; the second from agnosticism and scepticism."<sup>8</sup> Both, according to Quran, are states of mental illucidity and only those are persons of vision and wisdom who do not fall a prey to either.

### A Plea for Tolerance

From the preceding discussion, follows Azad's passionate advocacy of tolerance as one of the basic values of life, his deeply cherished belief in the essential similarity of the main teachings of all great religions, his

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume*, ed. Humayun Kabir, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. II, p. 178

interpretation of Quran's reverence for all religions and their founders. This is a categorical imperative in Islam - that there is no nation or part of the world but has had its prophet, that we must either accept them all or reject them all, for they are all messengers of the same God or Allah or Parmeshwar. The real object of religion is not to divide but to unite, to provide a rallying point for humanity which has been split up into fragments on the basis of race, geography, language and social and economic differences.

You may be separated into all these groups but there is one overriding sacred relationship which cannot be broken - you are creatures of the same Almighty God, bound to Him in homage and reverence. This bond cuts across all your man-made differences and can bring your hearts into concord. You may then still feel that the whole world is your home, that the entire human race is a single family and that all men and women are members of the family of one Creator.

This is, however, one aspect of the problem. Azad was poignantly aware of the political situation in the country which made tolerance not only a virtue but also an imperative necessity. If the canker of intolerance and narrow-mindedness was allowed to grow unchecked, it would eat into every healthy organism of our national life. In one of his eloquent passages at a University Convocation, he cautioned the country against this dangerous enemy.

In the advancement of nations there is no greater hindrance than narrow-mindedness. It is our duty to keep ourselves free from this disease in this new era of Independence which has just begun. There is no other disease so dangerous for the healthy growth of national life. It makes its appearance in every field of thought and action. Like an actor it masquerades in disguise. In the domain of religion it appears in the form of blind faith and wants to deceive us in the name of orthodoxy. In learning and culture, it makes an appeal to us in the name of our nation and country. It behoves us not to be taken in by these fictitious names. We must remember that the root cause of all this is nothing but narrow-mindedness.<sup>9</sup>

What irked him particularly was the thought that this 'disease', which he saw creeping into national life was totally repugnant to the national genius and traditions. It was out of tune both with his Islamic and Indian heritage. With the pride of a true Indian in this heritage, he proclaimed,

Other nations may have to learn new lessons for broadening their outlook. But so far as India is concerned, we can say with

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<sup>9</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, p. 21.

pride that tolerance is the main trait of our ancient civilization and we have been steeped for thousands of years in it. In other countries differences of thought and action led to mutual warfare and bloodshed but in India they were resolved in a spirit of compromise and toleration. Here every kind of faith, every kind of culture was allowed to flourish and find its own salvation. The highest school of Vedantism flourished side by side with agnosticism and atheism. Many thinkers of the modern world avow that this is the great message of ancient Indian civilization which the world has yet to learn.<sup>10</sup>

Azad's plea for tolerance is not, therefore, a plea for the mere 'sufferance' of other points of view, it is not a mere social necessity because there is nothing else that we can reasonably do in a world of differences. It is not the result of an inner indifference as is the case with many educated persons to whom no faith or religion deeply matters and, therefore, they are not bothered about religious differences. No, it is a passionate conviction - ideological and practical - that reverence is the right attitude towards all religions, that, for the understanding vision, differences in this field are superficial but similarities of values and ideas are basic, that what eventually matters is the recognition of the dignity of man and the grace of God through which men find their way to right ideas, emotions and actions, irrespective of the label under which they may choose to describe themselves. "Salvation and grace do not depend on man-made groupings, they come from the eternal law of faith and good deeds."

### Portrait of the Man of Faith

From this view of life and the role of religion in it, it is possible to piece together the character, and paint the portrait, of 'the good man' or 'the man of faith' (*Mard-i-Momin*), as Azad visualizes him, whose training should be the chief concern of education. In fact, he has vividly described, in two memorable passages in his *Commentary*, both the process through which man must pass to achieve this consummation and the attractive product which would emerge at the end of this journey. His language is deeply coloured by the religious idiom, but psychology as well as intelligent experience both corroborate the essential correctness of his map of man's moral and spiritual pilgrimage. I would venture to share these passages with you, for they are well worth pondering over.

When a man wishes sincerely to move towards truth and right, he must first cleanse his heart of past indifference and misdeeds and, vowing repentance, turn his heart and soul to God. In his spiritual pilgrimage, the exercise of *Zikr* and *Fikr* (deep

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<sup>10</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad*, p. 21

thinking into the natural and human miracles of creation) will lead him to the stage when his heart overflows with the loving praise of God and the realization that this world has not been created without purpose. Thus equipped, he would venture forth into the wide world (in pursuit of knowledge and truth) breaking the chains of earth-rootedness and exploring new domains of thought and new regions of geography. These experiences would establish the right relationship between him and his Maker and complete the (preparatory) process of the education and purification of the self. He can now step into the rank of the educators - those who become torch bearers of truth and right in the world, affirming all that is good by their precept and example, rejecting all that is evil and unworthy. They are then entitled to be described by the significant phrase of *Hafizun le Hududillah*, i.e., persons who become guardians of the Moral law, whose whole being and actions are moulded to this pattern. Having assimilated this law in their person, they present it to others and (peacefully and persuasively) strive for its acceptance.<sup>11</sup>

The other passage describing the product of this education, occurs at the end of his long and scholarly "Commentary" on the brief opening chapter of the Quran, entitled *Al-Fatiha*, which is couched in the form of a simple prayer to God — a prayer which is reverently recited by hundreds of millions of people in the world every day. In the few, well chosen words is epitomized, according to him, the essence of the educational message of the Quran:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!  
 Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,  
 The Beneficent, the Compassionate!  
 Master of the Day of Judgement!  
 Thee (alone) do we worship, Thee (alone) do we ask for help!  
 Guide us to the straight path,  
 The path of those whom Thou hast blest with Thy grace,  
 Not of those who have earned Thy anger or have gone astray

What, Azad asks, will be the mental and spiritual attitude of a person who sincerely believes in the letter and spirit of such a prayer, whose most striking character is its universality? I would let him speak in his own inimitable - but also unfortunately untranslatable - words:

Such a person passionately chants the glory and praise of God - not a God claimed as their own by different races and nations and creeds but the beneficent Creator of the entire universe, whose mercy and

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<sup>11</sup> Azad's Commentary on the Quran, p. 112



compassion encompass the whole human race. When he wishes to recount all His attributes, these two only come to his mind irresistibly - His compassion and His justice - which comprise for him the essence of His being. Then he bows his head in obeisance to Him, owning implicit, undivided allegiance, "Before Thee alone, O Lord, can I bow my head and from Thee alone do I seek help in all my needs and tribulations." Thus focusing his worship and his prayer for help and guidance on Him alone, he becomes indifferent to, and fearless of, all citadels of power and prestige built by man. He will not bow his head now at any other threshold, not be afraid of any other power, nor extend a beggar's hand before any other door. Then, he prays for God's grace to follow the right path - the only favour that his tongue is prepared to ask. And what is this right, this straight path? Is it the path of some particular nation or race? Of some particular religious group? No, it is the common path which all the great religious leaders of mankind, all the truth-loving, truth-seeking men and women of the world have trodden, whatever the age or race to which they belonged. Likewise, he prays to be shielded from the path of transgression and wrong. But here, too, there is no reference to any particular race or creed or nation but to the ways of all those who have fallen from grace and been led astray. Thus what he passionately desires is the universal good of all mankind and what he passionately rejects is that which is evil for all mankind. Differences of race, nation, community or creed - discrimination of any kind based on such considerations - do not cast their faintest shadow on his heart and mind. What then is the kind of mould in which the mind of such a person will be cast? He will worship the God of universal compassion and grace, and will, in no sense, whatever, be a man fettered by prejudices of race or nation or other exclusive groupings. He will be a man endowed with the spirit of universal humanism!<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, for any one with such a vision of man, education which contents itself with academic instruction or physical and social training and leaves the deeper layers of the heart and the spirit untouched, merely skirts the fringe of the problem.

In another context, he defines these human qualities in somewhat different words but they build the same beautiful integrated pattern, resoluteness to honour the exacting implications of one's allegiance to God, sincere respect for all human relationships, and avoidance of every form of injustice, belief that one is eventually accountable for all one's deeds - that there is no running away from the day of reckoning - a readiness to expend one's material, intellectual and spiritual resources not on oneself alone but on others who are needy and distressed and, above all, the moral strength to return good for evil rather than pay evil back in

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<sup>12</sup> Azad's Commentary on the Quran, p 224

its own coin. In the every day transactions of life, the rules of right and wrong are the same for all - they cannot be sophistically adjusted to suit "our people" or "our community" versus "other" peoples, as men have often tried to do. "O ye who believe", says the Quran, "be steadfast in the service of God's truth and bear witness for justice, and let not hatred of any people seduce you so that you deal with them unjustly. Act justly for that is what piety enjoins"<sup>13</sup>. In Azad's uncompromising words of comment

✓ Integrity is integrity under all circumstances - so is dishonesty. Differences of religion do not change the basic laws and reality of good and evil. He who behaves dishonestly or unscrupulously towards the members of any other group or religion will be denied the grace of God on the Day of Judgment. It is a heinous sin to try and protect a criminal or wrong-doer because he belongs to our family or tribe. You may possibly deceive the lawcourts but not God's great judgment seat!<sup>14</sup>

In a society like ours, which is still so powerfully dominated and fissured by petty but persistent considerations of caste, creed and class, poisoning public life, it is important and refreshing to have the universalism of social and ethical principles stressed so unambiguously. This, again, is in the deeper sense, an educational problem of the highest urgency.

Azad is also concerned to point out that we must learn to distinguish between the sin and the sinner, the evil and the evil-doer. Like the physician who is bent on eradicating disease but has solicitude for the sick, the physician of the soul and the true teacher should learn to hate sin and evil, while retaining their sympathy and compassion for the sinner and evil-doer. "This is the critical point where religious-minded persons have often tripped. Religion aimed at creating aversion to evil but they were misled into hating beings themselves whom they considered guilty. The essence of Christ's teaching was you should hate sin but not those who have fallen into sin. For a sinner is some one who has lost the health of his heart and soul and, as such, is he not, for that reason, more deserving of your care and compassion? Will you tend to your brother with solicitude or hand him over to the torturer's rack and whip?" This is, no doubt, the authentic voice of religion but through it speaks also the mind and heart of the true educationist. A teacher should be inspired by this precious spirit of understanding in his day-to-day work. At the school level, he should not treat children, who are unable to learn the multiplication table quickly, or to suppress their natural energy or vivacity in the interest of a mechanical discipline, as sinners deserving punishment and contempt. Its wider implications for life and education

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<sup>13</sup> Azad's Commentary on the Quran, Vo I, p 401

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p 327



are too numerous to be discussed but this is obviously a crucial principle in all human relationships, including that between the teacher and his pupils.

### Religious Education

In the light of the foregoing discussion, we can understand and appreciate Azad's attitude towards the problem of religious education in India. As one of the main architects of our secular State, he could not favour the idea of anything like compulsory, denominational religious education being provided in schools run by the State. Its practical difficulties and dangers are obvious and manifold. But he was deeply conscious of the importance of religion in life and, consequently, in education, and held that it should be pervaded by the *spirit* of religion. "If national education was devoid of this element, there would be no appreciation of moral values or moulding of character on humane lines." He sounded a note of caution, however, against what he called the "over-religiosity" of our people and the bigotry and fanaticism which characterized many teachers. He finds one of the finest expressions of this spirit of religion in Tagore - a spirit which transcended all narrow barriers of caste and creed and race. As he put it on the occasion of the inauguration of the Visva-Bharati as a Central University

The thing which has always struck me about Gurudev was his lofty humanism which arose above all sectarian and communal limitations. Born in one of the pioneer Brahmo families of Bengal, he developed, quite early in life, an outlook in which the whole world became to him a home and he felt a close affiliation with all humanity. This sense of kinship with the whole world is the essence of Indian culture, and perhaps its greatest contribution to the world. The development of such a spirit in Gurudev was encouraged by the atmosphere of his family in which the influence of Sufi poetry mingled with the humanitarianism of the nineteenth century England and above all there reigned the spirit of the truths of Upanishads. It was this consciousness of the fundamental spiritual unity of man that led Gurudev to found the Visva-Bharati where the world could unite in common brotherhood and realise the ideals of peace, goodness and unity.

Alluding to the non-inclusion in the University Act of a sentence which made a specific reference to God, he stated emphatically that,

It may find no place in legislation, but it certainly has a place - and perhaps a place of supreme importance - in the life of this University. I will declare with all the emphasis at my command that the objective, as defined by Gurudev, including the phrase left out in the Act, must remain the objective of your University and of all its teachers and

pupils The truth is that in these three terms used by Gurudev  
Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam,  
we have a conception of God which rises above all narrow  
limitations of race, religion or creed

It is a tribute to his far-sightedness that, following a prolonged debate and controversy on the subject, opinion is now beginning to veer round to the idea of moral and spiritual values being emphasized in education, as evidenced by the general reaction to the recent Report of the Sri Prakasa Committee. But this should be education in the true spirit of religion, as he envisaged it, imbued with reverence for all religions and a faith in the moral values which give meaning to life.

### The Survival of the Best

Azad is an optimist - not in the facile sense but in the deep and serious sense that the general trend of the movement of life is towards perfection, provided man makes himself an active and intelligent participant in the process. In life there is a constant struggle for survival, not the "survival of the fittest," in the limited physical or Darwinian sense, but the survival of the "*Anfa'a*" (the best and the most beneficial), i.e. of that which has the highest significance for the continuous, upward development of life. Trees grow and nature picks the fruit while the dry leaves and twigs are swept into the oven or carried away by the wind. Gold and silver are put into the fire, the dross is burnt away, the precious metals remain. Quran explains this law in the form of a parable:

He sendeth down water from the sky so that valleys flow according to their measure and the flood beareth swelling foam on its surface. Foam like unto it also rises when metals are put into the fire and smelted to make ornaments and tools. Thus Allah states the parable of the True and the False - as for the foam, (which is of no use) it passeth away as scum on the banks, while that which is of use to mankind abideth in the earth.<sup>15</sup>

This, Azad argues, is the eternal clash between *Haq* (Truth) and *Batil* (Untruth, Falsehood) which operates in the life of all organisms, including human beings, and is as applicable to individuals as to groups and nations. Truth not only connotes that which is of value but which also has the capacity to endure and abide, while Untruth, which spells waste and decay, is both valueless and transitory. This great moral law eventually governs the rise and fall of nations even as the laws of Nature govern the rise and fall of the tides. God does not deprive a nation of its greatness, unless it disobeys the basic natural and moral laws. Nor does He give a people goodness and power, unless they bring about a

<sup>15</sup> Azad's Commentary on the Quran, Vol II, p 278

psychological revolution within. In Azad's sonorous words "Every nation is cradled in a life of its own making and, in turn, digs its own grave. The means of worthy survival are seeking and striving, thinking and action and the capacity for service. The end is a movement towards perfection"<sup>16</sup> This is a view which is generally in conformity with the thesis which Toynbee has developed elaborately in his monumental works. If education is the work in harmony with the fundamental laws that operate in life, it should strive towards the gradual achievement of this ideal of perfection

*Maharaja Sayajirao Memorial Lectures, University of Baroda, 1961*

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<sup>16</sup> Azad's Commentary on the Quran, Vol II, p 88

# The Enlightened Faith of Abul Kalam\*

*Syed Abid Husain*

Mohiuddin Ahmad, later known as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), came from a family of Muslim divines and had himself completed a course of higher studies in Islamic theology, traditional Muslim history, and philosophy as well as in Arabic and Persian literature at a very early age. He had started his brilliant literary and journalistic career when he was no more than twelve years old. By the time he was twenty-four he had won for himself a name as a writer and public speaker. The year 1912 was an important turning point in the public life of Maulana Azad. It was during this year that he started the publication of his weekly journal *Al-Hilal* from Calcutta, which not only infused a new spirit in the intellectual and literary life of the Muslims, but also led to their religious and political awakening. Through *Al-Hilal* he created, on the one hand, a consciousness of current political affairs and a desire for political freedom among the religious class, and, on the other, a love and reverence for religion in the minds of the English-educated class. This is confirmed by the words of Maulana Mahmud-ul Hasan and Maulana Shaukat Ali, which the editor of Maulana Azad's *Tazkirah* has quoted in his introduction. Maulana Mahmud-ul Hasan is said to have remarked to Maulana Azad, "We had forgotten the real work. It was *Al-Hilal* that reminded us of it"; and Maulana Shaukat Ali told the editor that "Abul Kalam showed us the way to faith."<sup>1</sup> Thus the work of bringing the old and the new educated classes of Muslims closer to each other, which was accomplished at one end by Maulana Mohammad Ali, was performed at the other end with much greater success by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

The inspiring message that Maulana Azad gave to the Muslims of India through *Al-Hilal* had two main objectives; firstly, to revive in them the true spirit of religion and to reorganize their religious and social life, and

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\* Syed Abid Husain, *Destiny of Indian Muslims*, Asia Publishing House, 1965. This is part of the chapter entitled, "Shifting Positions", pp.88-89.

<sup>1</sup> *Tazkirah*, edited by Fazluddin Ahmad, Albalagh Press, Calcutta, 1919, editor's preface, pp vi-vii

secondly, to infuse in them the spirit of freedom and to persuade them to join the national movement of the Congress in its struggle for achieving self-government. At this stage we can call him, like other freedom-loving ulema, an advocate of religious nationalism. Yet there was one important thing in which he differed from other ulema. He was quite clear from the very beginning that to hope that some foreign country, like Afghanistan or Turkey, would help India in her struggle for freedom, was no more than an idle dream. National freedom could be won only through the nation's own efforts.

For some time he played with the idea of bringing about a political revolution with the help of the Bengal terrorists, but gave it up soon in favour of the democratic method of the National Congress. At the same time, he started a campaign of trenchant criticism against the Muslim League and carried it on continuously, till (as we have seen) in 1913 the policy of the League tended to come closer to that of the Congress, and, in 1916, the two organizations entered into an alliance which lasted for several years. Yet from a religious point of view, he, like Maulana Mohammad Ali, regarded a universal organization of Muslims around the Turkish Khilafat as not only necessary but also feasible. Accordingly, when the First World War broke out between Turkey and Britain, Azad's *Al-Hilal*, which in the eyes of the Government was far more dangerous than Muhammad Ali's *Comrade*, was forced like the latter to close down through the repressive machinery of *The Press Act*. Maulana then started, in 1916, another journal *Al-Balagh*, in which he announced that he was engaged in translating the Quran and writing a commentary, both of which would be published within a year. After a few months, however, he was externed from Bengal under the Defence Ordinance, and the manuscripts of his translation and commentary, as well as some printed forms, were confiscated. He left Calcutta and stayed in Ranchi, where he was afterwards placed under internment.

The three and half years of internment were spent in an effort to pursue his life's mission of making the teaching of Islam comprehensible to the people of the modern age. He had to retranslate eight *paras* of the Quran, because the manuscripts of the first translation had been taken away from him. Before he was released he had completed the translation of all the thirty *paras*. Shortly after his release in 1920, he made arrangements for the calligraphy of this translation and the work had actually started when he was again arrested in connection with the Non-cooperation movement and all his papers, including the complete manuscript of the *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*, were once again confiscated. Unfortunately, when the papers were restored to him after his release, he found that the whole material except a few stray sheets had been lost. It was lucky that the account of the Maulana's family life, which he had written under the name of *Tazkirah*, had been published in 1919, incomplete as it was, by one of the

Maulana's admirers, Fazluddin Ahmad. Otherwise this, too, would have been destroyed. It is a remarkable feat of Maulana Azad's patience that, in spite of all his manifold activities, he started translating the Qur'an for the third time. He completed the first volume, consisting of the commentary on *Sura-e-Fatiha* as an introduction to the text and translation of the first eight *paras*, in 1930, and the second volume, comprising the text and translation of the next nine and a half *paras*, in 1936. The publication of both volumes, however, had to be postponed for a few years. About the third volume of the translation, Maulana once stated that he had the complete manuscript with him. It could not, however, be published during his life, and now, unfortunately, there is no trace of this part. The translation of a few pieces from the remaining twelve and half *paras* of the Qur'an were collected by Mr. Ghulam Rasool Mehr, and published under the title *Baqiat-i-Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*.

The *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*, especially the introduction to *Sura-e-Fatiha* is one of the most important works in the religious literature of the Indian Muslims produced during the last two hundred years. It contains the essence of the ideas that Maulana Azad had about religion, in general, and Islamic religion and its teachings, in particular. We shall briefly review it towards the end of this chapter.

Immediately on his release from internment in the last week of January 1920, Maulana threw himself into the tremendous fight which had started between the Indian nation and the British government. During his forced stay in Ranchi, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and the imposition of martial law throughout the Punjab had set the whole country afire. The Muslims, particularly, were wild with rage on account of the high-handed way in which Britain and her allies had dealt with the Turkish Empire and the Khilafat. An outcome of this was the Khilafat movement, which marched shoulder to shoulder with the movement for national freedom. Maulana Azad took a prominent part in bringing not only the popular movement of the Khilafat Conference and the organization of the Muslim divines, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, but also the Muslim League which represented the educated middle class, into line with the Congress. The address that he delivered in February 1920, as President of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference served as a strong theoretical basis for the Khilafat movement and as an inspiring call for the religious organization of the Muslims.

Maulana Azad wanted to win the support of the National Congress for the Khilafat movement. The Congress leaders were divided over the issue but the greatest of them all, Mahatma Gandhi, was strongly in favour of the Khilafat. In March 1920, in consultation with Maulana Azad and other leaders, he decided to try to persuade the National Congress to make the Khilafat demand, a part of the national demand. At the same time, he placed before the Muslim leaders the programme of Non-

cooperation with the government which he had devised as an effective non-violent weapon in the fight for freedom, and won them over to his point of view. In May 1920, Britain and her allies published the terms of peace with Turkey, which were disappointing to supporters of the Khilafat movement. Thereupon the Central Khilafat Committee met in Bombay and adopted the Non-cooperation programme of Mahatma Gandhi, which was, in fact, the declaration of a non-violent war against the Government. At a special session of the Congress in Calcutta in September 1920, the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation programmes were considered and approved. In December 1920, at the Nagpur session of the Congress, the demand for the restoration of the secular power and dignity of the Turkish Khilafat was formally included in the national demand along with self-government and the redress of the Punjab wrongs. This was the occasion for Mr Jinnah to leave the Congress.

This was the first big success of Maulana Azad's political life. The dream of marshalling Muslims to stand by the side of Hindus to fight the battle of freedom, which he had dreamt many years ago, was now being realized. The splendid scene of national fervour and national unity that India presented in 1921 was, to a great extent, due to the inspiration of Maulana Azad's speeches and writings.

Towards the end of 1921, he was again arrested by the Government and was this time formally put on trial. His defence was later published under the title *Quol-e-Faisal*, stirring message of freedom which will always find an important place both in the political history of India and the history of Urdu literature. At the beginning of 1923, when the Maulana was released from jail, the country was passing through a deplorable period of Hindu-Muslim riots and internal dissensions in the Congress. He devoted all his energies to finding a solution to these problems. In September 1923, the Special Session of the Congress, in which the two groups for and against taking part in the impending election came to a compromise, was held in Delhi under his presidency. Presiding over such an important national assembly at the early age of thirty-five was a distinction that nobody has ever shared with the Maulana in the history of Indian politics.

The next four years were for the Congress a period of triumph both on the legislative front and in the field of constructive work, but one of confusion and frustration for the political and religious organizations of the Muslims. The Muslim League was now almost extinct. After the establishment of the secular government of Mustafa Kamal in Turkey and its abolition of the Khilafat, the Khilafat Conference was desperately fighting for a lost cause. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema sided with the Khilafat Conference on the question of the Khilafat, with the Muslim League in the matter of safeguarding the special interests of Muslims, and with the Congress in the struggle for national freedom. Maulana Azad kept in contact with these three Muslim organizations and continued his efforts



to lead them towards national unity and freedom without ever faltering in his loyalty to the National Congress. His realistic mind saw that the revival of the Khilafat, after its abolition by the Turks, or the setting up of another universal Islamic organization, was not a practical proposition. As President of the Khilafat Conference in 1925, he advised the Khilafat Committee to maintain its organization but to give up the idea of reviving the Khilafat and to work for the education, social reform and economic progress of Muslims. His advice, however, was followed only to the extent that the Khilafat Committee, while adhering to its original objective, paid some slight attention to constructive work also.

In 1927, during the nation-wide movement boycotting the Simon Commission, the Khilafat Conference and the Muslim League came closer to the Congress, but in 1928 serious differences again arose between them and the Congress over the issue of the Nehru Report. Now, Maulana Azad practically broke his relations with these two organizations. Since, however, many Muslims, in spite of being in complete agreement with the objective of the National Congress, wanted a political organization of their own, he, in cooperation with thirty other nationalist Muslim leaders, convened the Nationalist Muslim Conference in 1929. His real field of activity, however, was still within the Congress. The Nationalist Muslim Conference could not establish any permanent organization, but served as a common platform for rallying the various nationalist Muslim associations—the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Shia Political Conference, the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Khudai Khidmatgars organized by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

In 1930, the National Congress finally declared complete Independence as the objective of the national movement, and a little later the fight for freedom was resumed under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in the form of the Salt Satyagraha (the civil disobedience movement against the Salt Laws). Maulana Abul Kalam Azad thereupon had to go to jail for the third time, this time for one and a half years. After a brief interval, in which there was a truce between the government and the Congress under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, he was arrested for the fourth time and sentenced to another year of imprisonment.

In spite of all his political preoccupations, Maulana Azad continued his writing work, especially the most important task of the translation of and commentary on the Qur'an, up to the end of the period under review. But, as we have said above, all that is available to us now is what had been written up to 1936 except the additions that were made in the second edition of the first two volumes of the *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*. No doubt this is only a small part of the great task of interpreting the teachings of Islam in the spirit of the modern age which he had set for himself. Still, it provides a glimpse into his basic religious ideas, and, therefore, a brief review of it will be worthwhile.



The keystone of Maulana Azad's religious thought is his concept of the nature of religious consciousness that he has taken from the Qur'an. According to him, religious consciousness is neither the blind faith that consists in unquestioning acceptance of any dogma, nor the pure intellectual conviction that can be induced by argument or discussion. It is rather a particular state of mind which is experienced when man, through a combined act of intuitive insight and rational perception, realizes that in the world there is purpose, order and proportion, that it is governed by a Providence. This consciousness of a beneficent Providence is necessarily accompanied by that of the existence of a Lord of Providence, of a Being possessing reason, will power and compassion. The Qur'an cites innumerable instances from the world of nature and from history that make us feel the presence of this universal Providence and the Almighty Lord of Providence, and thus induce in our mind that peculiar state of humility, reverence and faith which we call religious experience or religious consciousness. It was because the old commentators failed to see this special characteristic of the Qur'an that they tried to complicate its simple and direct teachings by indulging in hair-splitting arguments about grammar and rhetorics, forcing it into the incompatible moulds of Greek logic and philosophy, and it is for the same reason that today some people are trying in the name of re-interpretation of the Qur'an to squeeze it into the alien framework of modern science. According to Maulana Azad we should keep in view the Quranic concept of religious experience, and study the Qur'an in its own light and not in that of any old or new philosophy. Yet, in order to get at the real meaning of the Quranic text, it is necessary to guard against '*tafsir bil-rai*' (interpretation with a pre-conceived opinion) and to observe complete intellectual honesty and objectivity. The Maulana himself tried to follow this principle in his study of the Quranic teachings and arrived at some fundamental conclusions, which we shall briefly give in the following lines:

- 1 The presence of a beneficent Providence in the universe indicates not only the unity of God but also the necessity of Prophethood and Resurrection. Providence necessarily implies that prophets should be sent for the spiritual guidance of God's creation, and that this all too brief and limited life, should be followed by a broader and deeper life, so that man, the creation of God, may attain spiritual perfection.
- 2 Another necessary implication of the concept of Providence is the doctrine of the unity of religion. Surely, if a way of spiritual guidance is prescribed by God, who is the Lord of all, it should be for all creation and must be shown to all.

Thus the Qur'an says that Divine Revelation is the universal guidance which has existed from the beginning of the world and is meant for all mankind without any distinction and discrimination..To this

universal guidance it has given the name of “Al-Din”, that is, true Faith for all mankind<sup>2</sup>...Thus it is revealed in the same way in every age and every land. The Qur’an says, “There is not a single nook or corner in the world inhabited by man where a messenger of God has not been sent”<sup>3</sup> The way of all the prophets in every age and every part of the world was the same and all taught the same Divine Law of happiness and bliss. What was this Divine Law? The Law of true Faith and good works, that is, worshipping one God and leading a virtuous life<sup>4</sup>

In spite of this essential unity of faith, circumstances of time and place led to differences in the way of worshipping and living and the development of diverse religions. Thus far the harm done was not very great. However, when the followers of these religions wandered far away from their own original creeds, the unity of Faith was also lost. The Qur’an enjoins that it should be restored. It says to every religious group

If you follow really and truly the original teachings of your respective religions, which you have distorted by all sorts of alterations and assertions, then my work is done, because as soon as you come back to the real teachings of your own religions, you will find yourself face to face with the same truth towards which I am calling you<sup>5</sup>

- 3 The belief in the unity of God was inherent in the original teachings of all religions. On the question of Divine attributes, however, they went to one of the two extremes. Some conceived of these attributes as similar to human qualities. Others regarded God as free from all attributes. In the former case, people were led to the concept of an anthropomorphic God, and in the latter case, it was not possible to have any concept of Him at all. The Islamic doctrine of unity, which has been presented in the Qur’an, has found the true mean between these two extremes. It says,

God possesses all the good attributes which can be conceived by the mind of man. But it has also clearly and definitely stated that nothing has the slightest resemblance to God<sup>6</sup>

- 4 Like belief in the unity of God, the practice of virtue is also an essential part of Faith and a necessary condition for salvation. Salvation is, in fact, the practice of virtue throughout life. According to the Qur’an, God is just and His way of reward and punishment is not

<sup>2</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* (Translation of the Holy Qur'an with a commentary on *Sura-e-Fattha*), Lahore, 1947, Vol I, p 180

<sup>3</sup> Ibid , p 182

<sup>4</sup> Ibid , p 183

<sup>5</sup> Ibid , p 205

<sup>6</sup> Ibid , p 159

that of absolute monarchs who in an arbitrary manner reward those with whom they are pleased. It regards reward and punishment not as an act of God isolated from the general law of the universe but as its natural corollary.

It says that the universal law is that every state has a necessary effect and everything has a characteristic property. Just as God has endowed material objects with properties and effects, so there are properties and effects inherent in all actions. To these natural properties and effects of human action the name of reward and punishment has been given.<sup>7</sup>

The way in which Maulana Azad has interpreted the fundamental tenets of Islam in his Introduction to the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* generally impressed Indian Muslims, specially the modern educated class, as rational and liberal, and at the same time sound and satisfactory. It would not be wrong to say that his translation considerably widened the circle of those who read the Quran with understanding and received intellectual enjoyment as well as spiritual benefit from it. As the circumstances of the time did not allow him to complete his translation of the Quran and to write the full commentary, he could not realize his ambitious project of interpreting the entire religious, moral, cultural and social teachings of Islam, and make them acceptable to the modern mind. Still, the explanatory notes that he added to the translation touch upon a variety of subjects, from which one infers that he had considerable knowledge of modern philosophy, history, social sciences and to some extent also of natural sciences. He understood the requirements of modern scientific research and was endowed with qualities of reasonableness, enlightenment, broadmindedness and tolerance which are indispensable for any one who wants to interpret the message of the Quran for the modern age.

For instance, dealing with the questions of the propagation of truth and the relation between the sexes, he explained the Islamic view in a manner which satisfies the "democratic temper" of the age. Pointing out the differences between *Tazkir* (i.e., carrying to others the message of Truth) and *Taukil* (i.e., imposing it on them), he writes

The way of *Tazkir* is this. Persuade others to accept what you believe to be true. But stop at persuasion. Do not go any further. Do not forget that others have the right to agree or disagree. You are not responsible for them. *Taukil* means going about with a big stick for those who do not agree with you, as if God had made you responsible for the belief and unbelief of others... There are two rights, and each of them should keep within its own limits.. Everyone has a right to tell others what he thinks to be right, but he has no right to deny the rights of others — that is, to forget that

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 115

just as he has the right to accept or reject something, so have others to accept or reject it <sup>8</sup>

Explaining the position of the Quran about the status of man and woman, he writes:

The Quran not only inculcated the belief that women have some rights but declared in the most clear terms that as far as rights are concerned, men and women are on the same level. Just as man has rights in relation to woman, so has woman in relation to man. Men have, however, a special status in relation to women. They have to look after women. The way in which a family system works is that man is the executive head. Obviously this distinction does not give man any inherent superiority. It is only the pattern of family life that has assigned this position to him. All these explanations go to prove that as far as the status of the sexes and their rights are concerned, the Quran regards both as equal. But the social system has made man responsible for providing the means of livelihood <sup>9</sup>

Similarly, with regard to the story of "Ashab-i-Kahaf" (The people of the Cave) and the identity of "Zulqarnain," the Maulana follows a course quite different from that of other commentators and discusses these questions in the light of historical research and archaeological findings, so that what had been regarded as supernatural appears to be perfectly natural.

We have seen that in modern India Sir Syed was the first scholar to try to get at the teachings of Islam in their original form, free from all accretions, and to explain them in terms that are in keeping with the temper of the times and comprehensible to modern man. Very few people, however, regarded his religious ideas as important enough to study them, and even these few did not fully accept them. Still, they influenced the modern educated class to the extent that it realized the necessity of reconciling the spirit of religion with the spirit of the times. Thus Syed Amir Ali made an attempt to interpret the teachings of Islam in the light of the Western rationalism of the eighteenth century. His writings, however, were in English and were read only by a small number of people in India so that they could not make any lasting impact on the mind of Indian Muslims. Of those few English-knowing people who studied his book, some, like Maulana Muhammad Ali, were not satisfied with the point of view that the teaching of religion should be cast in the mould of nineteenth century Western rationalism, which the West itself had discarded as out of date. Maulana Muhammad Ali's plan of writing "Islam, the Kingdom of God" (which he could not complete), was to some extent a reaction to Syed

<sup>8</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* (first edition, published by Sheikh Mubarak Ali, Lahore, 1936), Vol II, p 174

<sup>9</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *op cit*, pp 310-311

Amir Ali's *Spirit of Islam* More significant and effective than the ideas of these two in connection with the reform of religious thought, was, however, the contribution of Dr Iqbal who threw light on the dynamic nature of Islamic teachings and pointed out the important place that a free and active personality occupies in the Islamic ideal of life

The qualities required, however, for carrying out the tremendous task of a liberal and rational interpretation of religion, which Sir Syed had set for Indian Muslims, were possessed by nobody except Maulana Abul Kalam Azad He had a great command of traditional Islamic learning and a working knowledge of modern sciences What was more important was that this God-given genius had intuitively assimilated the spirit of the time and its scientific and critical attitude of mind so that his unfinished *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* made a profound impression on modern educated Muslims and to some extent also on the religious class of the Muslims This gives us some reason to believe that if he had devoted his life exclusively to religious writings, completed his translation and commentary and dealt with the controversies and the doubts that they aroused, he might have given to the religious thinking of the Muslims of India and perhaps of the world, a new life and a new light Two things, however, distracted his mind from the work which God had set him his own ambition to reform not only the religious thought but also the religious life of the Muslims, and the need of the time that in the critical phase of Indian history through which they were passing he should lead his community and his nation in the fight for freedom

In his first objective he failed largely for two reasons In his outward life he did not have the simplicity and austerity that in our country automatically draws the common people to religious leaders, and his aristocratic temperament did not have the emotional attachment to the Muslim masses and the deep respect and perfect trust in them which was necessary to make him put up for a long time with their ignorance, narrow-mindedness and obscurantism and thus win them over gradually and persuade them to follow him on the path of reform and progress Many persons among the religious and the modern educated classes, who began with reverence for him and respect for his religious ideas, were gradually influenced by the tremendous campaign of vilification that his rich and influential political opponents carried on for years They turned against him and became suspicious even of his religious ideas

As for Maulana's political objective, it was partially successful. But the unfavourable factors to which we have referred did great damage to an important part of it India and the Indian Muslims achieved Independence but could not maintain their integral entity.

# Understanding the Spirit of Islam\*

*Mohammad Mujeeb*

Maulana Azad (1888-1958), the other religious thinker of our age who, as we have said, had the chance of defining *amal-i-salih*, was a person of an entirely different stamp. He was born in an extremely orthodox family of sufis and divines, and was brought up to lead a religious life. But he was intellectual and sensitive and responsive to influences. Even before his education had been completed, he became restive under the restrictions imposed on him by the opinion of his family and its large circle of followers. We have in his *Tazkiah* an almost allegorical account of his doubts, his spiritual agony, his return, like the prodigal son, to the bosom of his faith. He hints at having tasted forbidden fruit, but mentions only music. However, once he was firm on his feet, the pent-up forces of his personality were released. He took educated Indian Muslims by storm with his eloquence and fervour, when he began the publication of *Al-Hilal* in 1912, and remained in public life till his death. We have dealt separately with his political ideas and activities. What we need to note here is that his political ideas were the expression of his innermost belief. This took time to mature, but he had begun work on his commentary on the Quran in 1916, and the vicissitudes of his career served only to confirm him all the more in his faith.

Maulana Azad's writings, except for his *India Wins Freedom* and two collections of letters, had a deeply religious colour. Indeed, he seemed always to be talking the Quran. The difference between him and others who establish their arguments in a similar fashion is that he considered the Quran as the real basis of the faith, and it inspired all his thinking. He did not limit his horizon by accepting traditional interpretations, by deriving his opinions from other sources, and using the Quranic text as formal proof. He could, therefore, think more freely and independently than others, and warn and guide with complete self-confidence. As early as

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\* Mohammed Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1967. This excerpt forms part of the chapter entitled "Religious Thought", pp 457-463.



1913, Maulana Azad had arrived at definite conclusions on some fundamental issues

The purpose for which Islam came into the world was to command what is (recognized as) good and forbid what is (recognized as) evil, and commanding what is (recognized as) good and jihad are two forms of the same injunction. Therefore, every effort devoted to what is right, every expenditure of resources that serves the cause of truth and goodness, every labour and burden undertaken to promote justice, all pain and suffering endured in the body and the mind while striving in the way of God, all the fetters and shackles of the dungeon that bind hands and feet in punishment for proclaiming the truth, every scaffold to which the beauty of truth and the love of justice leads, in short, every sacrifice of life and property, every service with tongue and pen, performed in the cause of truth and justice, is jihad in the way of Allah, and is comprehended in the meaning of jihad

This is the reason why the command of jihad follows inevitably from (belief in) Islam, and no one can be a Muslim and a believer in the one God unless he undertakes jihad <sup>1</sup>

Islam does not commend narrow mindedness and racial and religious prejudice. It does not make the recognition of merit and virtue, of human benevolence, mercy and love, dependent upon and subject to distinctions of religion and race. It teaches us to respect every man who is good, whatever be his religion, to let ourselves be drawn towards merits and virtues, whatever the religion or the race of the person who possesses them. But above and beyond this law of universal goodwill, and I do not hesitate to own it even in this age of hypothetical impartiality, is the jihad of helping the cause of justice, worshipping Allah and establishing rightmindedness and justice. Islam teaches us that the purpose of the creation of man is that he should represent God on earth, and keep burning the torch of truth and light <sup>2</sup>

Muslims today do not need to lay new foundations or to exercise ingenuity. They have only to revive and reaffirm what has been commanded. (There is no reason why we should feel distraught over the new houses to be built; we need only to settle down in the dwellings we have forsaken.) This is the

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Hilal*, Vol II no 3, January I, 1913

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Hilal* Vol II nos 14-15, April 9-16, 1913.

difference in principle between my conviction as regards what is to be done and the methods of my contemporaries.<sup>3</sup>

These were not academic opinions. Maulana Azad could warn with all the fire and fervour of the traditional preacher. One of the articles in the *Al-Balagh* may be taken as an illustration of his particular method. In the actual context, the reference is to the Israelites, but it is also obvious from Maulana Azad's paraphrase of the verses that he is challenging the Indian Muslims to consider whether the statements do not apply to them also.

Now their condition is such that whether they are threatened or not threatened, it is all the same to them; whether you warn them of the consequences of their actions or not, they will never listen, because of the falsehood in them God has sealed their hearts, closed up their ears, and thrown over their eyes a veil so that they have become ignorant and hard-hearted. No matter how many lamps are lighted in front of a blind man, he cannot see the light, and without doubt this is an utterly wretched condition.

The real reason for this is that to call upon a person to break the chains forged by centuries of custom and habit, belief and practice, and adopt a new line of thought and action; to step all at once out of an environment of particular beliefs and practices in which his mind has developed from childhood to old age, to call upon him to do this is to ask him to acquire a new body, a new mind, a new imagination, new senses; to turn away for ever from, or rather sever all relations with everything that was near and dear to him, to wipe his mind clean of all that he liked and was habituated to, in brief, to be born again, to go through a mental renaissance. To achieve this is one of the most difficult tasks human resolution could set itself<sup>4</sup>

In the *Tazkirah*, Maulana Azad went further. He made it clear that the major influence responsible for breeding among the Muslims the mentality of the Israelites was the juristic view of Islam, in which the criterion was not the Quran but legal opinion, not the life which the Quran asks us to lead, but conduct - whether intrinsically good or bad - that could be proved correct under the law. He condemned this attitude, and with a moving eloquence praised those who rebelled against it. But in the *Tazkirah* his thinking - and also his writing - is not systematic. His appeal to the Quran and Hadith give only a vague idea of what he had in mind, and do not indicate what he considered to be correct belief and practice. But we shall be accepting much if we accept Maulana Azad's view that the juristic

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<sup>3</sup> *Al-Hilal* Vol II no 21, , May 29, 1913

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Balagh*, Vol I, no I, November 12, 1915, p 4(h)



interpretation of Islam, which had been passively acknowledged by the Muslim community or had been forced upon it, was in fact a misinterpretation that obscured from the eyes of the Muslims many of the highest moral and spiritual values of Islam.

Maulana Azad's maturest thought appears in the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, the first volume of which was published in 1931. *The Tarjuman* is a commentary, and is technically concerned only with what is stated in the Quranic text, which has been closely followed. But the questions which Maulana Azad has raised are all relevant to life, his range of thought is wide and comprehensive, his conclusions clear, reasonable and satisfying. *The Tarjuman* is free from any tendency towards apologetics, and from any attempts to read into the Quran what is really not there. This is because Maulana Azad's thought, in fact, does spring out of the Quran and from no other source, and he has brought to the understanding of the Quran a rich and varied experience and an intensity of suffering along with the necessary knowledge. He has not written with an eye on the Western, or even the Indian Muslim readers. *The Tarjuman* is the product of deep personal conviction, of belief unpolluted by any extraneous considerations. It is, perhaps, the finest example of the constructive thinking enjoined on the Muslims.

There may be much in Maulana Azad's interpretation of details that is new, but discussion of these would take us far afield. The most significant characteristic of *The Tarjuman* is its approach, and this is fully explained in the commentary on the *Sura-e-Fatiha*, the opening chapter of the Quran. A discussion of this would enable us to indicate what Maulana Azad himself considered fundamental.

In this introduction, Maulana Azad gives an outline of the historical development of belief in God, but he does not concern himself with the philosophical or scientific proofs of the existence of God. He begins with an exposition of what the attributes of God as given in the *Sura-e-Fatiha* imply. The first is *Rabbul-alamin*. God is *Rabb*, and *Rububiyah*, or being *Rabb*, means "to develop a thing from stage to stage, in accordance with its inherent aptitudes and needs, in order that it might fulfil itself."<sup>5</sup> *Rububiyah* has an external aspect, which is nature and all that occurs in nature to make life possible. It has an equally significant, and, for human beings, perhaps even more important inward aspect, which is seen in *Taqdir* and *Hidayah*. *Taqdir* is the assignment of a particular role to everything, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the universal order, the means to fulfil the assigned role are provided and the role is, in fact, fulfilled. *Hidayah* is guidance, most obvious in the form of instinct. The assignment of a proper function and the guidance towards its performance, together, constitute proof that creation has a purpose and an

<sup>5</sup> *Mufradat-i-Raghib Isfahani*, a work on rhetoric. Reference given in *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Zamzam Co. Ltd, Lahore, 1931. Vol. I, p.35

end, that it is not without meaning and significance. It is this evidence that leads us on to belief in the Oneness of God, in revelation, in prophethood, in life after death. They are fundamental to the universal order, to its purpose and its meaning.

These ideas would not have needed such a detailed statement if they had not formed the basis of Maulana Azad's exposition of the other attributes of God mentioned in the *Sura-e-Fatiha*, His graciousness, His mercy, His justice. Reflection on the evidence we see of these attributes, leads Maulana Azad to the view that the basis of devotion to God should be the belief, which the Quran definitely inculcates, that human thought and activity should reflect these attributes. It should be man's function to help in the development of the society to which he belongs from stage to stage, in accordance with its needs and aptitudes, in order that it might fulfil itself. He should be gracious, merciful and righteous, he should not passively accept what is wrong, but strive actively for the justice, the balance, which is seen in the works of God, with the realization that patient waiting for results is a part of faith in God and His universal order. There are, of course, in every society those who refuse to believe. This refusal can either be passive and due to lack of understanding, or desire to follow the ancestral faith (of polytheism and idolatry) or the refusal can take an active and aggressive form. Both kinds of refusal amount to *kufr*. In regard to the first, the injunction of the Quran is to accept disagreement: "To you your faith and to us ours." Against *kufr* of the second kind, a struggle may be unavoidable and may even become obligatory, depending on the degree of the aggressiveness<sup>6</sup>.

The Quran bases belief in God on an inherent and universal urge in human nature. Anything over and above this is left to personal thinking and experience, and the Quranic concept is thus comprehensive enough to include all forms of monotheism. Islam, the universal faith (*din*) revealed in the Quran, is a confirmation of all monotheistic religions. It is against Islam to discriminate among the prophets, to follow some and to reject others, they must either all be accepted as having preached the universal faith, or all be denied; to deny even one of them is to deny all.<sup>7</sup> But what of religions like Hinduism? Maulana Azad rejects its polytheistic and idolatrous elements; he believes that definition of the Absolute by a process of negation, as in Upanishads, denies man the possibility of positive belief; and though it may promote a philosophic outlook, it cannot create an active, living faith. But as *din* consists essentially in devotion to God and balanced, righteous action, it follows by inference, that it is for the Hindus themselves, and not for the followers of Islam, to declare whether they do or do not believe in the universal faith. Maulana Azad regrets the fact that Hindus who knew better have, throughout history, been willing to

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*Tarjuman* Vol I, pp 111-113

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp 201-3

make compromises with, or take for granted as the fate of the ignorant, forms of belief that were polytheistic or idolatrous<sup>8</sup> This is a kind of tolerance which he does not consider virtuous or even morally justifiable. There will, of course, be those who just profess the faith and observe its basic injunctions, as there will be those whose faith draws sustenance from an absolute conviction and those who, as it were, live in the sight of God. But this does not permit us to recognize any distinction between the masses and the elite, the worldly and the religious.

“The Quran does not ask followers of other religions to accept Islam as an altogether new faith. On the contrary, it asks them to return to the true form of their own religion<sup>9</sup>. One of the reasons for the opposition by Jews, Christians and the idolators of Mecca to Quranic teaching was that it did not make any compromise with the spirit of exclusiveness. The Jews disliked its recognition of Christianity, the Christians its recognition of Judaism, the Meccans its recognition of non-Arab peoples. “The Quran says, if you do not deny that there is one Creator who has created this universe, with all that goes on in it, that there is one Providence which nurtures all alike, then why do you deny that there is only one Law, one spiritual truth, which has been revealed in the same way to all mankind? ..... You have one Father (*Rabb*), you all repeat the name of the same God, all spiritual leaders have shown you one and the same path. Is it not, then, the extremity of misguidedness, the murder of common sense, that every group is the enemy of every other group, and every man hates every other man, when there is one basic relationship, one purpose, one path? In whose name and for whose sake is all this dissension and war? Is it not in the name of the one God, and of the religions revealed by this one God, which have made all bow at the same threshold, and united all in the same bond of brotherhood.”<sup>10</sup>

One cannot say whether Maulana Azad realized the full implications of this doctrine. If the one God whom all worship revealed all the religions that centre round belief in Him, His providence, His graciousness, His mercy and His guidance, and the mission of Islam was to make believers in one God realize that there was a spiritual bond uniting them all, then the fact of the Muslims regarding themselves as a separate community must be considered a historical accident and not a doctrine of Islam. Maulana Azad emphasizes the difference between *din* and *shariah*, and holds that while the *din* is essentially one, there must be variety of *shariahs* in view of the diversity of circumstances in which human groups have developed.<sup>11</sup> These *shariahs* need not be exclusive or antagonistic; if they are, they need to be reformed in the light of the fundamental principles

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid , Vol. I, p.137 ff

<sup>9</sup> Ibid , Vol I, p 205.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Vol I, p.204

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p 213.

of the *din*. The *shariah* of Islam, however highly one may think of it, is also the result of a historical development. It ought not to be exclusive in spirit when the *din* is inclusive, and if, in any instance, we find that it divides where it should unite, the validity of the relevant injunctions should be examined. This would not be anything new, as juristic interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith have been continuously called into question. But if we adopt the attributes of God and the universal quality of *din* as our criterion, the results might be explosive enough to destroy the distinctions created between Muslims and monotheists professing other religions. The Muslims would then have no justification for confining their thoughts and activities to their particular community. They would have to be as universal in spirit as Islam. During the days of the Khilafat and *Non-cooperation* movements, Maulana Azad made his own position perfectly clear. He asserted that any form of association with the British government in India was a repudiation of Islam, and that friendship and co-operation could make Muslims and Hindus into an *ummah-al-wahidah*.<sup>12</sup> His authority for this assertion is that the Prophet Mohammad used these very terms in an agreement with non-Muslim tribes settled around Medina, but, in fact, his view was based on the deep conviction that such friendship and co-operation was a fundamental injunction of Islam and presented its true spirit. This view is diametrically opposed to the *fiqh* and has not been even regarded worthy of consideration by the most liberal interpreters of the *shariah*. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in holding this view Maulana Azad stood absolutely alone, for Indian Muslims and non-Muslims all disagreed with him in principle. But his faith was so deep-rooted that he could stand alone. And perhaps some day it will be acknowledged by the Indian Muslims that he had, in fact, discovered a new world of religious thought to redress the balance of the old.

Azad has given in his *India Wins Freedom* a purely secular colour to his ideas and his whole career, and it is indeed undeniable that he could eliminate irrelevant religious considerations when thinking of or discussing purely political issues. This detachment was possible because of the sincerity and strength of his religious belief. For a time he was inclined towards the revolutionaries of Bengal, for a number of years he was an eloquent Pan-Islamist. When, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements combined, Maulana Azad realized that Indian freedom was an all-important prerequisite for any form of effective co-operation between Indians and the outside world. The disappearance of the Khilafat brought despair to many and made them lose their balance. But Maulana Azad, though he had no followers, had already been recognized as a person gifted with political insight and moral courage.

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<sup>12</sup> Ummah can be translated as "people" or "nation". In the context of the agreement made by the Prophet it could also mean "body politic".

and, therefore, a person to be consulted and respected in his own right. We cannot here give the details of his career, or give examples of how his views influenced Congress policy. But just as he smoked freely and continuously in Mahatma Gandhi's presence, in spite of its being known that Mahatma Gandhi was strongly opposed to such indulgence, he also declared openly that for him non-violence was a matter of policy, not of creed. This basic disagreement with the Mahatma, for whom non-violence was not only a creed but the essence of Truth, did not affect the position of Maulana Azad. From 1930 onwards, when the differences between the Muslim League and the Congress became more and more definite and acute, many nationalist Muslim leaders began to waver and make compromises because of the fear that, if the Muslims disowned them, they would be isolated and lose their importance. But Maulana Azad could stand alone. The faith and courage which enabled him to do so entitles him to a high position among the great men of the world. He continued, in his own life, the glorious tradition of suffering for the sake of truth which is enshrined in his *Tazkirah*, though in *India Wins Freedom* there is not even a passing reference to the invective, the abuse and the gross insults heaped upon him by his Muslim opponents. The obvious inference from his being rejected by the Muslims and being accepted and honoured by the Congress would be completely wrong. Maulana Azad was in the Congress and with it throughout his political career, but he never thought it a moral obligation to agree with the Congress as a party. Particularly in the years after Independence he stood out as one who could be relied upon for absolute impartiality of judgement and for an unimpeachable integrity. He was too aloof to concern himself with persons, too intellectual to relish political small talk, too proud to think in terms of alliance, affiliation or opposition. He was a statesman who would not accept the normal functions of a politician and he was so engrossed in principles that he could not become an efficient administrator. He had to be taken for what he was, with no credentials other than his personality.

This excerpt is taken from the chapter entitled "Statesmen and Administrators", pp 441-442

## **PART III**

### **Current Memories**

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## **PART III**

### **Current Memories**





# Reminiscences

*Aruna Asaf Ali*

The first time I met Maulana Sahib must have been sometime in the early thirties. He and my husband were close to each other and it was taken for granted that when he came to Delhi, Maulana would prefer to stay at our residence in Kucha Chelan, a house with typical Mughal architecture, tucked away in the heart of the Walled City. Legend has it that during the turbulence of the 1857 uprising, British troops raided it, butchered nearly all the inmates, and buried the corpses in the fairly large courtyard.

When I first came to live in Delhi after my marriage in September 1928, I was a stranger amidst strange surroundings. I belonged to an entirely different anglo-hybrid, anglo-Indianized background, and, therefore, obviously, I found it difficult to fit into a truly Muslim Indian way of living, hoary with customary manners and traditions. To begin with I was most diffident about everything around me, specially because I knew that my husband's mother did not exactly approve of her only son marrying someone belonging to a different community and upbringing.

Fortunately, Asaf had acquired a synthetic culture and had many friends who also were Westernized and belonged to the elitist circles of the Congress leadership. Quite soon, I became a member of a truly secular group of men and women who were easy to communicate with. Most of them were involved, directly or indirectly, in our national struggle for freedom. They were distinguished lawyers, doctors, and writers in their respective provinces, drawn into the mainstream politics at the national level after Gandhiji arrived on the scene.

When I first set eyes on Maulana Sahib I was overawed by his patrician appearance. He exuded an air of gravity and seriousness, and seemed aloof and impervious to his surroundings. His appearance can best be described as classic — classic good looks and a classic frame of mind. At the back of my mind was the thought that he might not approve of his friend's marriage to a Hindu. But very soon I realized that he was an Indian of a rare type, quite oblivious of a person's caste, creed or social

background. We soon became friends. His vastly superior learning was no barrier and I learnt from him many things about the world beyond India.

Several years later, when I was deeply involved in the freedom struggle, and had been through several prison terms, besides the underground resistance movement which began in August 1942, he was to tell my husband, "Whatever prejudices some people may have had against you for marrying a Hindu have been washed away, because Aruna has more than proved herself a worthy patriot."

Maulana and Asaf Sahib spent all their hours of leisure together in Delhi. The visits were characterized by hard work throughout the day at the meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress. There was some relaxation in the evenings - mostly in the form of literary discussions among a few like-minded friends. Many times it was just the two of them, with me as an observer during the initial part of the evening. Maulana liked to recite Ghalib as well as the poetry of his predecessors and contemporaries. The selected few in the group of friends would be immersed in poetic conceits and metaphors. Maulana did not seem to believe in combining *ghazals* with music. The purist that he was, he felt that rhythmic innovation killed the soul of Urdu poetry.

His elegant but simple and austere life style became evident to me from the very start of our acquaintance. Asaf was fond of entertaining lavishly. Maulana's visits became an occasion for serving innumerable types of dishes. On one occasion, Maulana looked at the feast spread on the dining table and remarked that he would prefer frugal meals. I am afraid I did not take him seriously, attributing his remark to *takalluf* (formal modesty). In any case I did not want to be found wanting as a hostess. But one evening Maulana took a look at the dishes on the table and did not touch anything except just three items on the menu. He did not yield to my insistence that he should try them all. The message was clear. After that, I honoured his request and ceased to serve a large variety of dishes.

On Sundays, Maulana would suggest going out to see places of historical interest. We would pack a picnic basket and set off for long drives out of the Walled City. Maulana was fascinated by history. His encyclopaedic knowledge and razor sharp mind was a continuous source of amazement and education for me. On a trip to the Qutab Minar, for instance, he would want the driver to stop the car by the side of an unknown monument, and relate the most fascinating historical events surrounding it. His interest was not a nostalgic hankering after the past. His was an objective and multi-cultural, classical mind. His firm grounding in oriental literature and history found expression in his anecdotes. How well I recall his relating to me incidents in the life of Razia Sultan, one of my heroines. His storehouse of knowledge of over five centuries of Muslim rule in India made him a fascinating conversationalist.

I was fortunate enough to witness the collegial relationship between

Asaf Sahib and Maulana on the one hand, and Maulana and Jawaharlalji on the other. Sometimes Jawaharlalji would drop in at our house for a chat. One evening he came, and in an embarrassed manner informed Maulana that he had been provoked by some slogan-shouting crowds at a public demonstration. There he blurted out angrily when the noisy and unruly hecklers persisted in raising loud slogans, "How dare you interrupt me? Don't you know who I am?" Maulana listened with interest to Panditji's embarrassed self-criticism, and, when he asked, "*Mujhe ye nahin kahna tha?*" he replied, with an indulgent smile on his lips, "*Aap ne bilkul sahi farmaya*" It is difficult to translate in adequate language the chaste Urdu conversation. Everyone present, including Jawaharlalji, burst out laughing. They caught the good-humoured implication of Maulana's observation and were obviously amused by Jawaharlalji's impulsive remark. *Camaraderie*, and complete understanding were characteristic features of the exchanges between them.

On 9 August, 1942, all our leaders were arrested after the "Quit India" resolution was adopted at the session of the All India Congress Committee. A police officer came to arrest my husband, and I insisted on going along, despite the Anglo-Indian officer's protest that there was no warrant for my arrest or for me to accompany them. But I was determined to go to the railway station and see what was happening. Bombay's Victoria Terminus wore a deserted look. I can still picture Maulana, as he sat at the window of one of the compartments reserved for the arrested leaders. He looked grave and had a stern expression on his face. The sudden and sweeping arrests had immobilized the leaders. All those in that train must have realized that grim days lay ahead.

Earlier, an announcement had been made that Maulana Azad, as Congress President, would unfurl the flag at the Gowalia Tank. I walked up to his window and assured him that I would perform my duty and go to the meeting place to tell the people there about the arrest of all the members of the Working Committee.

From the railway station, I rushed to Gowalia Tank. I unfurled the National Flag and told the surging crowds that everyone of the leaders had been arrested and sent to an unknown destination. There was a roar of anger from the crowd. Instantly the police started teargassing us and we dispersed helter-skelter. Some of us rushed to Birla House and asked Pyarelal, Gandhiji's secretary, if he had left any message. He handed us a scrap of paper on which Bapu himself had written: "Everyman his own leader. Do or die!" This was a historic mandate for me and for several others. We refused to walk into the arms of the British and decided to work while avoiding arrest.

Maulana, along with other leaders, was detained in the Ahmednagar Fort. I remember Asaf Sahib telling me, later, after he was released in

1945, about the superhuman fortitude with which Maulana received the news of the death of his wife, Zuleikha Begum

After this long gap in time, I find it difficult to recount all the significant experiences of later years. I met Maulana Sahib in Calcutta after his release from Ahmednagar Fort in 1945. One evening, I went secretly to visit Maulana Sahib, at his Ballygunj House, accompanied by Humayun Kabir. I vividly recall arguing with Maulana and asking him why Congress leaders had begun discussions on the proposals put forward by the Cabinet Mission from Britain. I implored him not to compromise on the issue of India's unity and to beware of the wily schemes and mischievous offers of the Mission. He listened with a serious, almost angry look, then said with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice "*Aap ka khyal hai ham sab ghaddar hain?*" "Do you think we are all traitors?" I instantly realized that I had committed a blunder in doubting the integrity of Maulana Sahib and his eminent colleagues. I never meant to imply that our brave leaders were traitors. All of us in the underground resistance felt that perhaps they were tired and, therefore, wanted a compromise. Much water flowed down the Ganga thereafter.

In 1946, Asaf Sahib, as Railway Minister in the Interim Government, was allotted a house on Prithviraj Road. One wing of the house was automatically reserved for Maulana's use. Some months later, when Asaf Sahib went to Washington as India's Ambassador, the same house was retained by Maulana Sahib when he joined the Cabinet as Education Minister. Now our roles as host and guest were switched around. It was easy for me to reduce my needs to one room in the house. Accustomed to living in a restricted house in the city, and in prison cells, I disliked ostentation. I used to spend the evenings in Maulana Sahib's company and we exchanged information about developments in the country, he from the decision-maker's end and I from the common citizen's angle.

Maulana's basic beliefs had remained unchanged in the years since I first met him in 1930. He always thought of himself as a national leader, and not a leader of Muslims alone. He believed that the Muslims were not in India on sufferance and on no account should they feel inferior or apologetic. They must live in this country on the same terms as Hindus and other citizens holding different religious beliefs, that is, as equals among equals. He never accepted Jinnah's two-nation theory, which, unfortunately, became the battle-cry of fanatical leaders of Indian Muslims.

He had declared in eloquent words in his presidential address at the Ramgarh session of the Congress in 1940.

I am a Muslim and I feel proud that I have inherited the glorious traditions extending over 1300 years. I am not prepared to allow its least part to be lost. With all these sentiments I possess another sentiment, which has been produced by the realities of

my life. The spirit of Islam does not prohibit it. On the other hand it directs me this way. I feel proud that I am an Indian. I am an important element in this united nationality. Without me the temple of its greatness remains incomplete.

A firm believer in the process of parliamentary government, Maulana was unruffled when the communists won the elections to the Kerala Legislative Assembly. He said without a moment's hesitation, "*Agar ek vote sey bhi un ki aksariyat ho, to hukumat un hi ki honi chahiye*" ("Even if they have a one-vote majority, the government should be theirs"). His belief in democracy and secularism was unshakeable. He abhorred sectarianism and factionalism in political parties. His loyalty to the Indian National Congress was total.

Tragedy struck me in 1953. Asaf died in Geneva. The one individual I turned to for counsel was Maulana. He advised me over the telephone to bring Asaf Sahib's body to India and bury him in Nizamuddin by the side of his mother. His instructions were followed to the letter by Delhi's grieving Congressmen. The citizens of Delhi, in thousands, joined the funeral procession, and the city observed *hartal* for two successive days after the burial.

Jawaharlalji insisted that I spend some time with him and Indira at their Teen Murti residence. Maulana Sahib noticed that I was a little hesitant to accept the invitation. Eventually I accepted his advice and during my brief stay realized that Jawaharlalji, too, had sensed my bewilderment and grief.

Maulana Sahib insisted that I should continue to stay as his guest, should look upon him as a guardian, and count on him as a member of the family. However, after some time, I decided to shift to a rented apartment. I used to spend a little time with Maulana Sahib in the evenings when he enquired about my personal well-being. Our conversation used to centre around the political happenings in the country.

These are just a few recollections from twenty-eight years of association. As the years roll by, the memory grows dim, and one glides over events which do not seem of general interest. Mahatma Gandhi used to extol the merits of brevity. In keeping with his teaching, and in accordance with the dignity and decorum of Maulana Sahib's personality, I have done just that. I have restricted myself to relating a few events that were responsible for the powerful influence this magnificent human being had on my life.

# Impressions and Recollections

*Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay*

It was in Sevagram where the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress was in session, that I first really met Abul Kalam Azad, although over the years we had politely saluted each other. I had been invited to report on and discuss Seva Dal affairs as I was in charge of the women's section of the Seva Dal.

The meeting had ended when my solitude was broken by Pandit Nehru's salubrious voice. "I have a little constraint with you. It is about my friend Abul Kalam. He feels you don't seem to like him. He can't guess why, since you have not even met each other? He says you are free and at ease with others like me but so reticent with him that it makes him silent. Now why this icy air with him?" I was dumbfounded. "The answer is very simple. I am very much in awe of him. He is a savant, born in Holy Mecca, etc." "Stop all that nonsense," interrupted Nehru. "Come now and meet him. He is an extremely fine human being with a broad vision and a big heart, free from the pettiness which is rampant in political personalities. You will find him most objective, but with great depth. Contact with him is elevating. I can say lots more about him. But I will let you find out all that and more for yourself."

This was my first real personal contact with Azad. I was inevitably shy and diffident but he immediately put me at ease. He instantly became relaxed, and the usual stern lines melted away, beneath which I saw a kindly human face, with a gentle smile playing subtly on his lips. The frozen block which had stood between us seemed to melt. He welcomed me warmly with a few words. Hesitatingly, I tried to explain my reticence. "I was overawed both by your personality and your reputation as a savant. I can't lay claim to even ordinary academic distinction. I feel free with Jawaharlal as I have been working with him in the Seva Dal, and accompany him on Seva Dal tours. Now I feel so free I can even detect some of his long treasured secrets." He laughed heartily and asked how I qualified to be let into one of them? I hesitated a moment. "I detected



one on my own. For instance he raises little storms of anger, throwing people off trail, creating fear, even panic. But really, he is not in any such rage at all. It is mostly a put on act. When I first uncovered it, he showed great annoyance to hide his discomfiture; then he laughed in his usual hearty way, which showed that he trusted me. I hope you will too, I mean, trust me!" He nodded with kindly seriousness. That is how our relationship began and continued.

We rarely met, but from each contact I came to know and appreciate him not only as a many-sided man, but also as a rare and unusual politician. Above all, I grew aware of a kind of an acute seventh sense he seemed to bring into play. I also became aware how few people, even among his colleagues, knew of his early life which to me seemed full of golden moments. Though we met and communicated briefly, every visit held a singular surprise for me. He had been born in the depths of orthodoxy and grew up in the dim vaults of the Mecca tradition but he had moulded himself into (to use a hackneyed phrase) a modern or rather current personality. This fact is of immense and crucial significance in the role he played in India's struggle for freedom.

Intellectual hunger began stirring in him unusually early. The significant element was his political maturity, which made him aware of the global turmoil. He realised that the traditional knowledge that had been imparted to him, valuable though it was, would not provide the weapon to deal with the current tangles. He had to master modern knowledge in order to carve the appropriate tool to successfully deal with the problems confronting the world. His mind instinctively turned to politics in his early youth, responding to the uprisings particularly in the Islamic countries, like Egypt, Turkey and Iran. His contact with the young revolutionaries in the countries he travelled through, stirred his entire being. He was stung when these revolutionaries showed surprise and contempt for the young Indian Muslims who seemed devoid of any political spirit. He realised that the education prevailing in our country was deadening and whatever political consciousness was present among the Muslims was based on their whole-hearted faith in the British rulers whom they regarded as the real *Maabap*. The only political Muslim group was founded on Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's political philosophy of complete faith in the British. This naturally divorced the Muslims from the nationalist movements which had begun to surge throughout the country.

Azad was disturbed by this tragic situation. "Indian Muslims must co-operate in the work of the political liberation of the country," he declared. The first thing he realised was the compelling need to free himself from the old conventional ties and strike a path of his own. That is when he added the pen-name *Azad* to his own. This nomenclature exemplified his life; whenever a knotty problem arose, his was the only independent voice. What is more, he was invariably proven right, and many times the country



was left worse off, when he was unable to carry the others with him

Azad was sure that the Muslims' indifference was due to the fact that they were never alerted or stirred by proper political education or any nationalistic stimulation. He provided this in the form of a journal, *Al-Hilal*. The result was a literary explosion. *Al-Hilal*'s contents were like a knife thrust deep into every Muslim heart, for its basic tenet was that national unity alone could lead to the resurgence of liberty and the emergence of a free India. The Muslims were most sensitive to the issue of the country's freedom, and the circulation of the journal reached over 25,000 copies a week within a couple of years. It was as though Azad was a superman, working some kind of magic. This project of Azad worked like a political miracle and laid a deep foundation for national unity. It was one of the most basic and significant political events with far-reaching consequences. An angry government tried to block this radiant beam which was heating up nationalist feelings, and Azad had his first taste of internment.

Working through his paper, Azad had seriously begun to cultivate political contacts with Indian revolutionary elements. By now he was convinced that Hindu-Muslim collaboration and direct action, alone, could bring freedom. He was largely instrumental in creating the need for direct political action in place of "speechifying", appealing to the authorities, submitting memorandums etc. He became immersed in building up secret societies in various regions. Those of us who got to know Azad in his middle age, so serious, staid and unruffled, could not imagine his involvement in these underground activities, nor did anyone refer to them, in case they sounded frivolous.

Azad was released as World War I ended, and that is when his and Gandhiji's paths crossed, a most momentous event in India's history! They met at a gathering on the Khilafat issue. At this very first meeting the two responded to each other and recognised their kinship. Gandhiji, in his usual simple way, announced that direct action was needed, which, in his opinion, was non-cooperation. There were many veterans around, all of whom had mental reservations and they prevaricated. Finally, only one man was left; unhesitatingly Azad nodded his acceptance. Very soon he gave public expression to his support of the non-cooperation programme as delineated by Gandhiji. Thus, he came to be bracketed with Gandhiji, and all his thoughts, and actions became similarly aligned.

Yet there were occasions when he felt that a proposal, if negotiated and given the chance, might serve to break in the continuing stalemate in the current situation; on these Azad would differ with Gandhiji. For instance, faced with a boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit, which became one more fiasco among several such infantile dramas (which the British used to indulge in, imagining they would boost British glory), the British, as usual, agreed to some concessions to tide over this impregnable dead-

lock. They were prepared to convene a Round Table to discuss India's future, while the Indian side added the release of all Congress leaders as a pre-condition. The Government's assent, however, was only partial. Only those who were to participate would be released, which would include all the Congress leaders, but this would be done only just before the Conference. Gandhiji was not in agreement with these modifications. The proposal fell through. While Azad had no illusions about the Conference, he felt, however, that India should seize every opportunity for negotiations and try to wrest whatever advantage was possible. But this was not the whole of Azad, just before this incident he had been playing an entirely different role, first a budding revolutionary, then a fledgling in the rising civil disobedience movement which was sweeping through the country, and, finally, with Gandhiji and other leaders feeding the flame of revolution with his fiery speeches.

By now all the important national leaders had jumped into the political arena, but the main credit for endowing it with a truly secular character certainly goes to Azad. The presence of the cream of Muslim leadership in the front rank, with names to contend with, may be said to be largely Azad's agile but purposeful handiwork. How heart-broken he must have been when the movement was withdrawn just as it reached its height. The disappointment lay like a deadly pall on the land. Gandhiji as the "original sinner" was condemned to a hefty six years sentence. Months later when Azad came out of prison and found the political scene in a mess, he took firm grip of the prevailing conditions and had a special session of the Congress convened over which he was elected to preside. The two opposing groups in the Congress gladly welcomed and accepted his leadership. They agreed to his formula for solution, namely, that both groups function freely, i.e. those in favour of entering legislatures and ministries, and those opting to stay outside and do the constructive work. Congress would thus be kept busy in different national activities. Here again, Azad untangled a critical situation and restored the premier nationalist body to its pristine glory. Himself he kept away from any ministerial office. Once again his unique statesmanship triumphed.

The overwhelming election victories and the hearty zeal with which personalities wooed the votes, proved the intrinsic unity of the Congress in which Azad had complete faith. The fact that Congress won so many reserved Muslim seats proved how right Azad's contention was. During one of our conversations, he confessed that at least part of the reason why he was able to untie some of the most obstinate knots was that he was not associated with any socio-political group within or outside the Congress. Though his sympathies were with radicals, he could enter into the tough sentiments of the hardened bigots who were always on the war-path against liberalism; he could pull out some of their sharp claws and render them less belligerent. "Was 'nt this very taxing?", I asked. He explained

to me in his cool relaxed manner, "If one does not get too emotionally involved in these problems oneself, and one's inner being stands alone, one really becomes a separate entity untouched by the conflict and unruffled by the cascade of words" That was what made him so unique, so able to perform what seemed impossible feats. He could convince each of the contending parties that it was being given due importance. He had the rare gift of eliminating the irritating element of *rejection*, which helped in maintaining a cleaner and calmer atmosphere. There were many occasions when I was inspired watching these rare scenes.

The outbreak of World War II created a completely new scene in India. Circumstances placed heavier weights of responsibility on Azad and brought out many hidden qualities in him. For Gandhiji, the ravages of war seemed to wind themselves around his sensitive being like fierce gales. Reminiscing over those dark days Azad once confided,

When Gandhiji realized that India was being unceremoniously dragged into this world massacre, his mental distress reached a breaking point. He could not reconcile himself to India participating in the war under any circumstances. He showed obvious signs of suffering from an intense mental crisis. This personal agony was aggravated by the passionate and desperate appeals made to him by people from all over the globe to somehow save the world from this futile carnage. Sensitive human beings all over the world looked to him as the natural saviour who would secure peace and save the world from this impending annihilation. It was the most difficult time for him for he saw the world on the verge of devastation, and he could do nothing to prevent it. You may hardly believe it that at times he sank into such depths of distress that he even spoke of suicide. Since he was powerless to avert it, he thought he would at least not be a helpless witness to it.

As I had been out of the country at the time, I had no idea of such personal traumas of the war times, and had these sentiments not come from Azad, I would hardly have believed them. Azad with his inimitable ability to ride out the storms, got the Working Committee to pass two resolutions as a simple *via media*. The first reiterated the contention of the Congress that non-violence was the correct policy to attain freedom and must be maintained. The second declared that though India's rightful place was in the democratic camp, she would refrain from participating in the war till she herself became free. Gandhiji was pleased by this reiteration of faith in non-violence. But he knew that Azad did not go along with him the whole way, and, under the present stress, Gandhiji continued to beseech him for his full support. It must have caused Azad acute pain to refuse to accede to these pathetic pleadings. He analysed his reasoning to me

quite lucidly "For me non-violence was a matter of policy, not of creed. Therefore, India had the right to take to the sword if she had no other alternative, though it would be nobler to achieve Independence through beautiful methods. I felt, all along, that there was a distinction between an internal struggle for freedom and an external one against aggression. I believed the two issues should not be confused." Despite this lucid explanation, the majority of his colleagues rejected his views causing him acute pain and almost a sense of rejection.

AZAD agonisingly watched the meandering events. While the war dragged on and its flames started to fling Eastwards like giant tongues of fire that almost lapped the fringes of our borders, Azad, and under his guidance, the Congress, remained steadfast in their stand. As he curtly summed it up, "War has given India an opportunity for achieving her freedom. We should not lose it by bartering it away for a mere promise." He possessed a stout political sense from which he never wavered, no matter how heavy the pressure. When a conquering Japan loomed threateningly on our horizon and a few thought that it may rescue India from the grip of British imperialism, Azad rejected such illusions. Once, when I asked him about this, his answer was very characteristic, proving the clarity of his mind. "National self-respect did not think in terms of **change of masters** (uttered with tremendous emphasis). There could be no welcome for Japan, active or passive. Even though armed resistance was beyond us, we still had the weapon of non-violence which we have used for two decades, which no one can snatch from us." This proved his fundamental faith in non-violent resistance, in spite of its low profile. He was, in fact, keen to keep up some mass movement even in this depressed period to retain people's spirit, and let the country continue to simmer, even if it be with a spark. So the Individual Satyagraha was launched under Gandhiji's guidance, since Gandhiji was ever apprehensive of any violent outbreak under the global pressure of the war which was now at our doorstep.

Azad, going by his instinct, got busy organising volunteers to meet any emergency. Gandhiji's intuition saw a very different picture. The Japanese would advance into India only if the British were here, for their war was with them and not India. Azad's whole line of thought and action was opposite to Gandhiji. But at this juncture Gandhiji asserted himself most powerfully, for he was fully convinced that if the British continued to rule India, Japan would march in. As a final gesture, he made his last call to the foreign rulers, "*Quit India*". The call reverberated through the whole country, and blazed it up like a bonfire.

By 1945 the scene had changed. Japan was the only surviving threat. The British came out again with a copy of their old offers. The Central Executive Council was to be Indianised for the present. Now the Indian tussle in all appearances took on a communal colour. Jinnah objected to

Congress nominating two Muslims as its representatives on the Central Executive Council. On this the negotiations broke down.

Two important events which illustrate Azad's steadfast adherence to the principles he had adopted, occurred in quick succession. One was the revolt of the Indian naval personnel. In his mind Azad was clear that the hour for the final negotiations was fast approaching and no smaller distractions should be allowed to deflect this. In the existing mood of the country, the revolt, naturally, aroused wide support. It needed an Azad to firmly try to halt it. He was clear in his mind, however, that in case the rebels were not returned at his assurance, or punitive action taken, Congress would retaliate. But his talk with the Commander-in-Chief ended smoothly. It seemed as though Azad's sincerity and integrity always carried the day. Soon, there followed the trial of the officers of the Indian National Army organised by Subhas Chandra Bose. Azad reacted swiftly as any true patriot would. He felt the Congress had a duty to assist the caged personnel facing trial for treason. Azad's clear mind saw that they were more sinned against than sinning. When the Japanese had entered the area around Burma-Singapore where this Indian army was stationed, the British had unceremoniously handed the area over to the Japanese. Thanks to Subhas Bose's initiative in building up the Indian National Army, they gladly and proudly joined it to liberate India, instead of facing the drudgery of war prisoners' camp of the conquering Japanese. When the war tide turned and the British army reoccupied these regions, it took these Indians as prisoners, and prosecuted them as traitors.

Azad pressed on the Viceroy and rightness of holding a public trial, which was agreed to. He, then, saw to it that the Congress put up a vigorous defence. Though the country was seething with flaming enthusiasm, Azad kept an iron grip on these cyclonic waves. His great concern was to preserve a calm atmosphere in anticipation of the coming negotiations. In course of time, the Indian National Army prisoners were all released.

The national political negotiations opened with the arrival of what was called the Cabinet Mission. Azad's far-sightedness had already visualised the framework he wished to place before the negotiating body and he had already obtained the Working Committee's approval for it. The broad framework based on a federation with certain added details now forms the basis of our present constitution. The ensuing negotiations, along with Azad's robust efforts to satisfy the Muslim demands are, of course, well known. Even so, the Interim Government turned out to be a leaky boat rocking precipitously on stormy waters. Although the Muslim League was supposed to have accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, its role was corrosive for the Interim Government. It boycotted the Constituent Assembly, the bedrock of our future state. As one looks back at these turbulent times, Azad assumes the picture of a powerful captain, who is fighting to safely navigate the tremulous boat to the port. He had left the presidentship



of the Congress against everybody's wishes, for, his presence always filled everyone with a sense of strength. When the Interim Government was formed, naturally, everyone was anxious he should be there, for his presence created a stable world. He seemed to have made a tremendous impact on Lord Wavell whose confidence he had fully won.

After a great deal of pressure Azad did join the government. By now he had become a great national force. Things that could easily be overlooked did not slip his memory. For instance, there was regular aerial bombardment of tribesmen in South Waziristan. Azad got this stopped. Lord Wavell seemed prepared to accede to Azad's requests. When Pandit Nehru was arrested and imprisoned in Kashmir for breaking the ban on his entry, Azad, feeling the utter futility of this action, wanted him to return. Though it was already late night, Lord Wavell immediately had a plane despatched at Azad's request which brought Nehru safely to Delhi by the early hours of the morning.

Now we come to the finale of this great historic episode of India's battle for freedom. Lord Mountbatten's arrival on the scene marks the beginning of the end. The partition of India. The lamp of Independence lit on 26th January had dimmed, if not fully extinguished. The flag we had so proudly raised that memorable day was half-mast. For Azad this was his saddest hour. Reminiscing thoughtfully over the concept of Pakistan, he murmured with a slight shudder, "The very term *Pakistan* goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of the world are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories is non-Islamic, and a repudiation of the very spirit of Islam. Infact the Prophet has said, "God has made the whole world a mosque for me." To my mind this is a symbol of defeatism. As a Muslim, I am not giving up for a moment my right to treat the whole of India as my domain. It would be like giving up my patrimony. It would be a sure sign of cowardice. Even from the point of view of communal interests of the Muslims it can in no way benefit them." He then added "In the political context the word 'minority' does not mean a numerically smaller group. it should in fact be absolutely so small as to be incapable of protecting its own interests. It is not merely a question of numbers, there are also other factors that count. When we talk of a two-nation theory, we are flying in the face of history. The ancestors of most of us are the same. In the last thousand years we have reached out to one another for our mutual spiritual, cultural, moral and material benefits."

Azad played other roles with equal aplomb and dexterity. For instance, when the Congress Ministry was functioning in Bihar, a clash between the Congress and the Zamindars had to be straightend. When this encounter was described to me, an exciting word picture was drawn which showed Azad bent over in earnest but quiet tones, his acumen and power of persuasion brought into full play. "It was a sight for the Gods," said my narrator, "Especially when negotiations seemed to be at a breaking point,

Azad's smooth tact and power of persuasion saved the situation. Finally, an agreement was successfully hammered out and enacted into a law within a few months. When he started the negotiations, the local tenancy laws were totally unknown to Azad who picked up the legal terms even as he thrashed out the entanglements." Thousands of tenants of Bihar were thus able to enjoy the full benefits the law provided them, through Azad's successful and ingenious aid of enduring value.

As in politics, Azad left an equally indelible mark in literature. Though he inherited the traditional scholastic style, he so revolutionised it as to make it attractive to the average man. In fact the noted Sajjad Ansari is supposed to have said if the Holy Quran had been revealed in Urdu it could only have been in Azad's prose. He had an enviable literary heritage. His family goes back to the Moghul times, strictly speaking, during Babar's time to a famous religious divine. One of his immediate ancestors held a very high post originally created in Shahjehan's time, specially to promote learning and scholarship, by distributing gifts of lands, endowments, pensions and the like to scholars. Even after the Moghul power declined, this post and system continued. With such a background Azad was bound to be unusually endowed with every facility to acquire literary knowledge. His mother, too, came from a scholarly family.

The illuminating revolutionary crusade that swept the Islamic world from 19th century onwards, endowed the various concerned languages, including Urdu. It had its own impact on Azad's thought processes and style. The essence of this outpouring was a revolt against imperialism, exhorting action to destroy slavery and oppression, and upholding the dignity of human beings.

As a member of the Working Committee I met Azad from time to time, and occasionally had chats with him when I could speak to him about his early years, his views on matters outside politics, and current affairs. I thus discovered many hidden powerful elements in him. In several ways he stood out among his colleagues. He seemed to possess almost an uncanny insight, which perceived things that were easily missed by others. That is why his surmises and his decisions invariably turned out right, and where his suggestion or advice was rejected, the result was unhappy.

In spite of his display of prodigious scholarship from an incredibly early age, I would not apply the epithet prodigy to him, which to me connotes an abnormality. The impression he gave me is that from his young days, along with his natural growth, he imbibed a vast degree of learning through sheer hard study. The vast collection of books that surrounded him, written in half a dozen languages were proof enough. He was not an outgoing, easy, sociable man. He was not aloof, nor perched on the olympian heights as some thought, for his heart was close to the people, his hand on their pulse. How else could he move thousands through his writings or his speeches? "I love my moments of solitude for

then I can gaze penetratingly at my self without outside intrusion." He once confessed this in his relaxed moments. He left an impression of a man of great poise, silent, but containing a solid core that made him seem to tower over others. One, therefore, had to know him over a long period to be aware of his encyclopaedic knowledge, and the soaring of his mind over vast subjects.

Maulana Azad had been in office as Minister of Education for quite a while when he invited me to lunch with him. I had not met him for a long time as I had left the Congress. I felt a bit reticent, but curious too. But he put me at ease with a warm smile and a friendly pat on my hand.

I want to share with you some thoughts and plans, for I know you will be interested. I want your reactions. My Ministry is promoting three institutions which I meant to designate as *Akademis* - not patterned after the Western academies. Not that I don't respect them, I have the highest respect for them. But it is my ambition to root these in our own soil and grow under our sunshine and be fed by our breezes. They will serve three phases of our culture: literature, performing arts and what are called fine arts like painting, sculpture etc. They will have their Indian designations like Sahitya, Sangeet Natak, Lalit Kala and the like. One separate institution will be for international association and interaction for not only do we have to learn from the world, the world, too, has much to learn from us. But our bedrock, the foundation of our own culture, will be the *Akademis*; for there is deep, deep within me the very essence of our ancient faith in the continuum of human existence, which emphasizes the unity of all life, and that the essence of human values — past, present, and future — are single, like an ever-running thread, which constitutes what we call 'tradition', and that is why we respect it. The *Akademis* will thus be the reservoirs that preserve the past nourishment, yet hunger for fresh new showers which each new seasonal cycle brings. How else would we be able to quote old Urdu couplets or ancient Persian verses to express in lively eloquence our innermost thought even though the verses are hundreds of years old.

I quiver as I recollect him explaining generously to me, when I begged him to explain some of his recitations. It was like watching an endless panorama of pictures or motifs. He could invoke a host of images out of a single line of a couplet as several strands of music, with gentle turns and twists, end in an orchestral symphony.

These institutions should serve to disseminate what was the sum and substance of the teaching of all the Prophets who appeared in different ages and among different peoples, that we



are one single brotherhood of people As a Muslim I am fully conscious of my inherited glorious vast variety of that legacy I am equally proud of being an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood is a vital factor in my life Now you know what I want of you - to give your best to these institutions in whatever capacity you choose

It was a solemn moment. I could barely speak. I was so overcome. I murmured, "Yes, I will." I kept my word. I served fifteen years in the Sangeet Natak Akademi and almost as much time in the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

## As I Knew Him

*Ansar Harvani*

During the Quit India movement, I was a prisoner in the Alipur Central Jail, Calcutta, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, along with other members of the Congress party, was imprisoned in Ahmednager Fort in Maharashtra. Towards the end of the Second World War the members of the Congress Working Committee were sent to the jails of their respective provinces. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Narendra Dev and Pandit Pant were transferred to Bareilly jail, and Maulana, who belonged to Calcutta, was sent to Bengal.

The Muslim League ministry of Bengal, headed by Sir Nazimuddin, instead of keeping Maulana Azad in a regular jail, requisitioned the palace of a zamindar of Bankura, which was surrounded by walls higher than those of regular prisons. Since I was the solitary Muslim prisoner in Bengal, Mohammad Ali Bogra, who later became Prime Minister of Pakistan and who was Parliamentary Secretary to Sir Nazimuddin, asked me to give company to the Maulana and I readily agreed.

I spent more than two months with him before all the Congress leaders were released at the conclusion of the war. It was a real education for me. I found him a versatile person with a thorough grasp over world history, literature, and philosophy. He spent most of his time reading books in Arabic, Persian, French and English, on subjects such as history, philosophy and literature. It was from him that I borrowed and read Marx's *Das Kapital*.

I was just twelve plus, when I joined the Indian National Congress as a volunteer. The All Parties Conference was to meet at the Kaiser Bagh Baradari of Lucknow, which was once the venue of dances, dramas and music to entertain the Don Juan Nawabs of Oudh. It was to be presided over by Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, then Congress President, who was addressed as Rashtrapati. Being the youngest among the Congress volunteers, I was attached as an aide to the Congress President. This became a matter of great satisfaction and pride, even in my later life.

The Conference met in August, 1928, and it was attended by everybody, who was anybody in Indian public life. Its purpose was to discuss the Nehru Committee Report suggesting a constitution for Dominion of India. It was here that I had my first glimpse of important personalities like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mrs Annie Besant, Sir Sankaran Nair, Srinivas Shastri, M R Jaykar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, young Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the most prominent figures in the galaxy of these leaders. Being an attendant to Dr. Ansari, I had the good fortune to see them even at private and closed door meetings. I had seen them discussing various issues which I was hardly expected to understand. At these gatherings, I found Maulana Azad, one of the most respected persons. He was listened with great interest, even by leaders who were much older than him.

When I approached Maulana Azad for his autograph, he wrote me an Urdu couplet and remarked, "You will understand it only when you grow older."

*Hum muwahid hain hamara kaish hai tark-e-rusum  
Millaten jab mit gayeen ijza-e-iman ho gayeen*

We believe in the unity of God, our cult is to shun conventions. Where differences among communities were erased, each community became part of the same faith.

Later, I watched Maulana Azad at various crucial political junctures. On the eve of World War II, Congress was facing a great crisis. Sharp differences had arisen between the followers of Gandhiji who were described as "rightists", and those belonging to the Congress Socialist Party, Communist Party, followers of Subhas Chandra Bose and the legendary associate of Lenin, M N. Roy, were described as "leftists". It appeared that the time had come for the parting of ways. Among the Congress leadership, it was Maulana Azad alone, who kept cool.

The year 1939 started in India with violent controversy about the term of Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been elected as Congress President at the Haripura Session. Subhas Chandra Bose wanted a second term and was determined to contest election scheduled to be held on January 29, 1939. Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad implored Maulana Azad to fight against him, the press speculated that he would be the official candidate. But Azad politely refused to enter the contest, and, ultimately, the rightist candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, was defeated. Maulana Azad, though close to the elder Congress leaders, enjoyed the full confidence of those who belonged to the leftist group. Behind closed doors he made several attempts to defuse this crisis, but did not succeed.

During those days, the Bengal and Punjab Congress Committees had

many factional disputes Maulana Azad, being incharge of Punjab affairs on behalf of the Congress High Command, made several visits to Lahore to resolve these differences. After the tragic death of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1928, his followers, belonging to the Servants of People Society and having the resources of various insurance and banking institutions, got up in arms against their rivals. I was in Lahore when he called Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava and Dr Satyapal, the two factional leaders, to iron out their differences. Both of them agreed to have him as the arbitrator.

Maulana Azad selected a young Oxford graduate, belonging to one of the most respected families of Punjab, Mian Iftikharuddin, as the President of the Provincial Congress Committee. This ended all the unseemly controversies surrounding the established Congress leadership.

He had a great sense of humour. Most of his close friends were much older than him. One of his closest personal friends was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. This was the time when Subhas Bose had organised his Forward Bloc, and Sir Tej Bahadur had come to meet him during one of his visits to Lucknow. He pulled Maulana's leg by pointing out that Subhas Bose has formed Forward Bloc, and obviously he belongs to the Backward Bloc. Maulana gave a hearty laugh and said, *Mere Bhai*, his usual way of addressing, "I may belong to Backward Bloc but you always belong to Awkward Bloc, and will continue to be there!"

To understand Maulana Azad's versatile personality, it will be interesting to go into his family and earlier background. Following the first War of Independence of India, described by British historians as sepoy mutiny, the Muslims, in general, and Muslim ulemas (divines), in particular, were the main target of the victorious armies. A number of them were tied to the barrel of a gun and blown up. Many of them were hanged in the centre of main Delhi market of Chandni Chowk, and kept hanging for days to teach a lesson to rebels. Some of them were deported to newly discovered island of Andaman which was to be converted into a penal colony. Some of the enterprising ones fled to the Indo-Afghan border, and a few of them reached Mecca, the holy city of Islam.

Young Maulana Khairuddin who had a large number of disciples in India managed to reach Mecca and was given asylum by the Turkish Sultan and Caliph who ruled over the Arabian peninsula. He was a man of great learning and joined the most prestigious Islamic seminary, where he taught Muslim jurisprudence and tenets of Islam. His popularity as a man of learning earned praise from the people of Mecca, and a noble man of a distinguished Arab tribe gave his daughter in marriage to him.

In 1888, a son was born, who he named Ahmad Mohiuddin, later on became to be better known by his pen-name Abul Kalam Azad. Queen Victoria, who had assumed power from East India Company, had already declared clemency to Indian Muslim fugitives abroad. Despite the insistence of his disciples, who visited him in Mecca during Haj, he could

not prevail upon his students and Arab associates to allow him to return to the country of his birth

Towards the end of nineteenth century, however, he came back to India to settle in the new imperial capital of Calcutta. Young Ahmad Mohiuddin came with him. But even at the age of ten he was dissatisfied with his environment. One of his earliest memories is recorded in *Tazkirah*

My earliest recollection is of the aura of dignity and sanctity all around me, and I found my family honoured and revered as if they were idols. While I was still a child, thousands of men used to come and kiss my hands and feet as the son of a Pir. Apart from my family elders, any man I ever saw was bowing before me, overawed with respect and homage. Extremely able and elderly men used to come and sit with respect and homage just as if I were in fact their idol. To every word that escaped my lips, no matter how worthless and meaningless, they listened with bowed heads and very great confidence and respect, and to everything they responded with, 'Hear! Hear!' and 'Yes, indeed!'

Azad said that usually the sons of Pirs spend their time in this way and do not bother to study, but simply remain ignorant. Thanks to the tradition of learning in his family, his father's efforts, and his own interest, he escaped this fate. Still, he emphasized, the family atmosphere was extremely conservative, his father had no time for the question "why?" and directed two-thirds of his writings against Muslims of the school which challenged these practices. All his teachers and all his books were like this. As he saw it, there was no reason to hope that one brought up in this way would be anything other than a successful Pir in the family tradition. It was obvious, he ironically put it, what influence on the mind an upbringing of "such breadth" would have.

Azad, however, failed to reckon with the education that he did receive. It was precisely that training which helped undo his father's plans for him to become a Pir. Azad later realised the limitations of this education, but it gave him a thorough knowledge of the classical bases of Islam, which, aided by Azad's own intelligence, inevitably made the young boy suspect that there was something strange about the Islam he saw around him. His father's overwrought insistence on the rightness of his ways could only have further provoked questions in the boy's mind. The elder man was excessive in the acceptance of the adulation of his disciples. Azad reacted first emotionally, then intellectually.

Suddenly, when I was at most thirteen years old, my heart became disgusted with my present circumstances and what I saw around me... The unrest increased until I was ashamed by and despised the things that in other peoples' eyes were so

honourable and esteemable Now, when people kissed my hands and feet, I felt as if some great evil were taking place A few days before, the very same spectacle had been for me the source of the greatest pride and self-satisfaction'

Then Azad describes the next stage, his realization that the beliefs he had been brought up with were, "nothing but *taqlid* of ancestors, devotion to ancient customs, and inherited dogma" When he asked why he should believe all this, the only answer he received was, "Because that is what you are told," or "Because that was the faith of your father" This only raised his doubts further

Another factor bore upon this situation, the boy's sense of fairness and refusal to accept unearned honour Azad recalls an incident that helped him to date the revolution in his beliefs, but did not help him to explain it. In fact it explains more than he knew. The incident was a visit to Calcutta by his cousin from Mecca. All the adulation of Khairuddin's disciples was a new experience for this cousin He revelled in it and actually encouraged it This was too much for Azad From that time on, he began to restrain people when they wanted to kiss his feet, and he would go off and reflect for hours on how wrong all this was He said he did not question the near worship people gave his father, as he thought that was his right as their Pir What worried him was that they honoured him too, when he was only an ordinary person like the disciples themselves, and had done nothing to deserve it

His father himself was a great scholar, but engaged the most learned teachers, to teach young Ahmad Mohiuddin, Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages He personally taught him the Muslim theology, and Islamic history. Later, Azad left for Cairo in Egypt, the greatest centre of Islamic learning, where he came into contact with the leaders of the Pan-Islamic Movement, who were busy organising Muslims from Algeria to Indonesia to overthrow Western imperialism Ahmad Mohiuddin, there and then, decided that a free Islam can only survive within a free India

On his return, he started writing articles under the pen-name of Abul Kalam Azad, the name which stuck to him for his entire life He joined a popular Urdu paper *Darul Sultanat*, Calcutta, and attended the first conference at Dacca where the Muslim League was born Incidentally, Mr Jinnah, a prominent leader of the Congress, was nowhere to be seen at that gathering of the Muslim elites who had assembled under the patronage of the British government, to give birth to the All India Muslim League.

On his return from Western Asia, young Abul Kalam Azad was toying with the idea of escaping from the domination of his father, and his traditional approach to Islam. An opportunity arose, when he got an offer from one of the most popular Urdu papers published those days from



articles entitled "Military News" and "The Fall of Antwerp", as well as to a picture of Belgian troops under which appeared the Quranic verse "God was not tyrannical to them, but they were tyrannical to themselves." Azad was on tour when he heard of the forfeiture and the search of his office. He sent a wire ordering the immediate publication of the number being printed. His comment was, "We shall, with all our might, continue *Al-Hilal* and, God willing, shall do so." As a matter of fact he was not able to do so. The security deposit had been paid more than a year earlier, and, when it was declared forfeit, the government demanded a second deposit of Rs 10,000. Azad was forced to close the press.

Undaunted by the closure of *Al-Hilal*, he launched a new newspaper *Al-Balagh* from a different address in Calcutta. This continued to be published until he was taken in police custody under Defence of India Rules and interned at Ranchi for the duration of War.

During his glorious journalistic career, the Muslim League was the target of Azad's attack for what he regarded as its lack of democracy. He resented the fact that it was under the control of a few rich Muslims and was thus losing the opportunity of channelling the enthusiasm of the whole Muslim community. Azad called for an open conference involving the entire Muslim Community. Over time, Azad favourably noted changes in the Muslim League. In the early days, he said, some members were dedicated to freedom. But he continued to criticise the League for its loyalty to the British, its rich leaders such as the Agha Khan and Nawab of Dhaka.

On his release from Ranchi, after the conclusion of the Great War I, he met Gandhiji and was greatly impressed by him. He already knew important Khilafat leaders like the Ali Brothers, Dr M A Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan. He had attended the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress, where with the support of the Khilafatists, Gandhiji transformed Congress into a mass organisation, and traditional Congress leaders like Srinivas Shastri, M A Jinnah, and Sir Tej Bahadur were forced to part company.

Azad was youngest to be inducted in the Congress Working Committee. Along with Jawaharlal Nehru he had the longest tenure in the Congress Working Committee, which was described by media as Congress High Command. He toured throughout the length and breadth of India mobilising the masses for Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement. He was eagerly awaited even in far off Tamil Nadu and Malabar where Urdu is not understood, as his powerful orations were sources of inspiration.

In January 1922, he was arrested at Calcutta, and in his statement before Chief Presidency Magistrate, he asserted that he was eighteen years old, when he started writing and speaking on theme of freedom, and will continue to do it till his last breath. In 1923, he presided over the Special



Session of the Congress In the one hundred four years' history of the Congress organisation, in one shape or the other, he will go down in its history as the youngest man to preside over its deliberations

The following years were most frustrating for Maulana Azad By abolition of Khilafat by Mustapha Kamal Ataturk, the bottom of the Khilafat movement was knocked out Many of his Muslim colleagues were swept away by the communal movements, which replaced the Congress Others joined the Swaraj Party to fight the British from within the legislature. Maulana obviously did not feel at home with either of these sections However continued to tour India preaching the gospel of Hindu-Muslim unity

He accepted the greatest challenge of his life when he agreed to contest the Presidentship of the Ramgarh Session of the Indian National Congress in 1940 He received only a token opposition from M N Roy, a former member of Communist International, and was elected with the support of the "right", as well as "left" wing of the Congress

I was at Ramgarh when a parallel conference, presided over by Subhas Bose, was described as the anti-compromise conference. The leftist elements in the Congress were very much agitated against the traditional Congress leadership They did not even spare Gandhiji in their criticism But among the senior Congress leaders Azad was the only exception who enjoyed the full confidence of the cross-section of the Congress rank and file

I belonged to the leftist section of Congress and was a close associate of Subhas Bose who was a Congress rebel. I recall meeting him with Dr K M Ashraf, Sajjad Zaheer, Dr Z Ahmed and Faridul Haq Ansari, all of whom claimed to be leftists We got assurances from him that under his presidentship we should have no fear that Congress will have any compromise with the government of Winston Churchill on the issue of a complete and independent India

Maulana Azad's tenure as Congress President was the longest in the pre-Independence history of the Indian Congress He continued in this office till 1946 It was under his presidentship that the All India Congress Committee on 8th August, 1942, passed the Quit India Resolution and gave the call "Do or Die" The Congress movement was ruthlessly suppressed by the British police and army Thousands of people were imprisoned and hundreds were shot dead or hanged.

On his release in 1945, Maulana was entrusted with the most delicate task of negotiating with the British and the Muslim League for the transfer of power to Indians He negotiated with Lord Wavell, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and was impressed by his sincerity to leave India Later, at Simla he led the Congress delegation at the talks held with the Cabinet Mission headed by Sir Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India He wanted to meet Mr Mohammad Ali Jinnah. But, in his

arrogance, Mr Jinnah wired him that he could not talk to a "Congress showboy". The Congress leaders were desperate to come to terms with the Muslim League. Meanwhile, Lord Wavell was recalled and was succeeded by Lord Louis Mountbatten, a cousin of King George VI. Lord Mountbatten, assisted by his charming wife, Edwina, managed to sell the idea of partition of the subcontinent to Nehru and Patel, and Gandhiji, though reluctantly, blessed it.

Maulana Azad and his nationalist Muslim followers were heart-broken. The legendary Pathan leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who recently died, wept and exclaimed that he was thrown to the wolves. Maulana Azad's dream of a united India was shattered and he was a broken man. But he kept a brave face, and maintained his loyalty to his political colleagues. He never lamented in public.

Despite all these unfortunate developments his deep love and affection for Jawaharlal Nehru continued. He could not turn down his request to join his government, and reluctantly accepted the office of the Education Minister. Though under the new Constitution, Education was a state subject, but he left a deep mark as the Central Minister of Education. It was he who launched the University Grants Commission to make the universities autonomous of the whims of the central and state governments. He launched a number of laboratories for industrial and scientific research. He founded the Indian Council of Cultural Relations to popularise India's cultural heritage all over the world. He established Akademis to promote art, literature, music and dance. He explained his ideas about the functioning of these Akademis to some of us who had our doubts about them.

Here I am drawing on the Greek genesis when Plato called his school by this epithet which has since come to acquire a connotation of its own. It ideally answers what I have in mind today and breathes the full flavour of an academic body with all its dignity and stature. Only I propose to adapt the term as Akademi to conform to the Hindi pronunciation. The role of the Akademis will be to canalise fruitfully the new cultural forces released after Independence. While I believe that the arts have to derive their sustenance only from the people, the government must undertake their development and continuity as its primary duty. The Akademis will, however, be autonomous in their internal working and will include in their composition not only State representatives, but, equally, representatives of important art organisations and distinguished individual artists.

While he was lying on his death-bed on February 22, 1958, he caught hold of Jawaharlal Nehru and his last words were "Jawahar, Khuda Hafiz". Thus passed away a great giant of India's struggle for freedom.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the greatest scholars, journalists, statesmen, and, above all, a great human being. In the history of Islam he, along with Kamal Atatürk, will go down as the greatest social reformer of the twentieth century. He was one of the architects of Modern India and his secular ideas will always inspire future generations.

## Excerpts from My Diary

*Krishna Kripalani*

In some respects Maulana Azad had a clearer world view than even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who is usually considered a person with an international outlook. Jawaharlal, however, was at the same time a passionate nationalist and had to reconcile his world view with a populist national posture. Maulana had no such inhibitions. Though a leader of nationalist Muslims he had little respect for nationalism in its narrow face. I recall on several occasions his withering remarks about partisan nationalism. He loved and respected Jawaharlal but was amused at his passionate lyricism as a nationalist. Maulana was deeply religious in spirit but had scant respect for religion as an exclusive creed. Like Gandhiji, Maulana believed in Truth and in the name of Truth alone he condemned religious fanaticism and bigotry.

I was in the Ministry of Education and had many occasions of contact, direct and indirect, with Maulana Azad, and the more I knew him the higher became my regard. My main contacts were Hindus who seemed, in general, biased against Maulana Sahib. Their prejudice was ill founded. For Maulana Sahib, Hindus and Muslims were two arms of a nation. His deep insight into his religion was unlike those *mullahs* and *Imams* who thrive by claiming the role of chief intermediaries between the common man and Allah, the only God. Islam, in its root meaning in Arabic, stands for "submission to the will of God". The common innocent desert nomad could be an easy prey to the conflicting interpretations of Quranic injunctions.

His father, Maulana Khairuddin, was persuaded by Haji Abdul Wahid, a disciple of his, to settle in Calcutta. He made frequent visits to Mecca, and young Abul Kalam came to be intimate with the land of Arabic culture, which had given birth to Islam, which denounced all inequalities and distinctions and laid its faith in the credo that all men are brothers. Allah is the only God and Prophet Mohammad his sole representative. Islam thus could claim to be the first democracy, albeit a religious

one. Here equality of all men who profess allegiance to Allah has first place.

Mahadev Desai in his biography of Maulana notes that Maulana's progress in his studies was phenomenal. *Dars-e-Nizami* is a full course in Arabic and Persian languages, philosophy, logic, arithmetic, geography and history, which takes a very good student ten years and an average one fourteen years to complete. Young Abul Kalam took only four years to finish his course; he had, of course, the advantage of thorough grounding in Arabic before he came to India and actually began to impart his learning to others. When Maulana saw that the British were playing the Muslim community against the Hindus, by encouraging divisive fanaticism, when he realized that there was a real need for awakening the Muslims to their faith and bringing them into the mainstream of the national movement, he launched the weekly publication of *Al-Hilal* (The Crescent) to serve the Muslim world.

Maulana Azad's brilliant analytical mind and deep spiritual understanding were acclaimed by the Muslim community as authoritative. He was generally acknowledged for his Quranic commentaries and was called Maulana in his teens.

A special session of the Congress was held in Delhi on 15 September 1923, under the presidentship of Maulana. In his address he ironed out a practical solution which permitted those who had faith in the council entry and programme, and who wished to accomplish whatever possible from inside, and those who differed from this view and wished to follow the constructive programme of the Congress by remaining away from the corridors of power, to follow their respective paths leading to the same goal.

When Maulana Sahib passed away, I rushed to his bedside, to find Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in one of his saddest moods. He looked at me and said, "Now who remains there to pull me up if I take wrong decisions. The last of the stalwarts has gone."

Here I give a few excerpts from my diary, which though casual in observation, give us an insight into the personality of Maulana.

Cilecia

1 June '55

Left Bombay on the morning of 25th May. The Governor, Shri Harekrishna Mahtab, came to see Maulana Sahib off. Maulana Sahib must have been shocked to see his cabin, an ordinary first-class, one on the boat deck, pompously called state room. Exceedingly hot and stuffy, the same kind which I share with a young Bengali, Gangulee. No relation of Buri's<sup>1</sup>. He is simple, modest and considerate, and no strain as a room-mate.

Buri brought this notebook two days before I left and gave it to me to

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<sup>1</sup> Buri Nandita, granddaughter of Poet Rabindranath Tagore and the author's wife

write my impressions of the tour. Sweet of her. I am entering the first note ten days after we left Delhi. It has been hot and uncomfortable, and I find it difficult to sit down and write. I keep postponing until the impression has worn out. It is not due to heat only. More to natural laziness and reluctance to put thoughts into shape. I have started diary-writing several times. Each time with pious and seemingly firm resolutions. But after a few days of scribbling, the remaining pages lie blank. I have several such diaries lying about. I hope this will have a better fate, at least during the course of this trip.

3 June

Couldn't continue. It was too hot. The paper was getting wet with perspiration. It's still very hot, though less than the day before, which was the worst day we have had so far. It was our first day on the Red Sea. The cabin was hot as an oven. It was difficult to sit anywhere without perspiring except on one side of the deck where there was always a breeze. Maulana Sahib felt very uncomfortable, and admitted for the first time that it was a mistake taking this boat without air-conditioning. It would have been better had we travelled by "Iberia" which left ten days earlier and was air-conditioned. But as the Pakistan delegation postponed its visit to Delhi and arrived about the same time as "Iberia" was to sail, we had to cancel our own reservations. I tried to persuade Maulana Sahib to travel by air, I wish we had done so (he too now wishes the same). We would have been spared this spell of tropical heat, and would have saved about twenty days which could have been better utilized in seeing some more places on the Continent or a rest at some good seaside place. However, it can't be helped now. This discomfort will not last after Port Said, when we enter the Mediterranean. We have left Port Said about an hour ago.

The first stop was Karachi, on the evening of the second day. We reached at about 8.30 p.m. Maulana Sahib had retired to his cabin. He had not been feeling well ever since we left Bombay. There was a swell in the waters and several passengers felt sick. He, too, had a heavy head and felt uncomfortable. At about 9 p.m. the Pakistan Minister, Mr. Ghiasuddin Ahmed, and our High Commissioner, Shri C. C. Desai, accompanied by the Chief of Protocol, several newsmen and cameramen, came aboard and rushed straight to his cabin. I was just able to prevent them from coming in. I explained, as politely as I could, that Maulana Sahib had been feeling unwell and had retired and was not in a condition to receive visitors. I invited them to come the following morning when Maulana Sahib would be glad to meet them. They were surprised and disappointed, and didn't hide their feelings. The Chief of Protocol said that he had come to invite him to dinner specially arranged in his honour by the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali. Later, when I conveyed the invitation to Maulana, he said that it was a strange way of inviting

without previous intimation. The next morning Shri Desai and the Chief of Protocol came again. Maulana came down to the lounge and sat with them for long time. The P.C. conveyed to him another invitation, this time for lunch at the house of Mr Ispahani. Maulana politely declined. He was pressed to go ashore for a while, but he excused himself. The Associated Press representative of Pakistan had a fairly long interview with him mainly about the India Office Library. The interview was fully reported in the afternoon edition of Pakistan papers. Maulana, in turn, asked some questions regarding the condition of refugees, and rehabilitation problems in Pakistan. I was surprised to hear from our First Secretary in the High Commission that our External Affairs Ministry had sent no intimation regarding Maulana's arrival in Karachi. It was the ship that had informed the Pakistan Government of a V.I.P.'s presence on board and the Pakistan Government had conveyed the information to our High Commission a little while before our arrival at the docks. I had personally informed the External Affairs Ministry, and in particular Azim Hussain, of Maulana Sahib's programme, and was, therefore, surprised that the Ministry did not take into account that the Anchor Line ship would stop at Karachi. Most passengers went ashore and had a look at Karachi. I couldn't, partly because I had to be in attendance on Maulana, and, partly, because I had no desire to see again the city where I was born, now in alien hands, its familiar character entirely changed. Four years ago, when I was returning from London by this very boat, and it anchored at Karachi, I did not have the heart to go ashore.

I asked some passengers what they saw. They seemed to have been impressed by the good roads and the new colony built at Clifton. Otherwise they were disappointed. There was nothing much to see and almost nothing to buy. The prices, it seems, were prohibitive. The Indian currency was much in demand, though officially the Pakistan rupee is rated much higher. Everyone wanted Indian rupees and was eager to part with 12 rupees for 10 Indian rupees. This was confirmed by an official from our High Commission who said that almost all of the normal household goods required by the High Commission staff were supplied from Delhi. It was difficult to get even ordinary goods and medicines in Karachi, and what little was available was fantastically priced, and that in spite of the much advertised American aid.

We reached Aden on the 31st night. Our High Commissioner, Shri Dhawan, accompanied by his wife and several Indian residents, came to the ship. Again, I had the unpleasant duty of intercepting their passage to Maulana's cabin. They were very disappointed and said that several hundred Indian residents were lined up on the shore, eager to see Maulana Sahib. Shri Dhawan said that relations between the local Arab population and the Indian community had deteriorated owing to Pakistan propaganda and it would therefore have been very helpful if Maulana



could have got down and addressed the population in Arabic and explained the correct situation. His name was well known in the Arab world because of his great scholarship, and the people would have listened to him with respect. He was very disappointed that he could not even see Maulana. He did not complain, because I had sent him a radiogram that Maulana was not keeping well and would not be able to receive visitors at night. I had hoped that the ship would still be in Aden the following morning when Maulana would be in a position to receive visitors. But unfortunately we sailed at 5 a.m.

4 June

The weather is steadily improving. It is still warm inside but on the deck there is a lovely breeze. Maulana slept inside the cabin and passed a comfortable night. I usually see him in his cabin before breakfast. He comes down to the lounge at about 11 a.m. and stays on till about 6 p.m. Has his lunch, which consists of tea, toast and cheese, in the lounge. Yesterday he had a little macaroni.

There was a party of four Parsi gentlemen playing bridge next to the sofa where we were sitting. One of them greeted Maulana as usual and started to discuss the merits and demerits of prohibition in Bombay. They were, as can be imagined, bitter critics of the government policy. They asserted that prohibition was not only a total failure but was responsible for considerable corruption and mischief. Illicit liquor could be had for the asking, and was being brewed in several homes, right under the nose of the police. Several police officers knowingly connived at it, and filled their pockets with gratification. Maulana conceded that prohibition might be a failure so far as the well-to-do classes were concerned, but he said that Shri Morarji Desai had assured him it had saved hundreds of working-class families in the industrial districts of Bombay. At this a fat Parsi gentleman in the party who, it seems, was a wine-dealer, shouted at the top of his voice that the Prohibition was a farce when the nation's leaders themselves drank. He went on screaming out arguments and insinuations. Everyone in the lounge was surprised at this vulgar display of foolish manners. Maulana however was very patient and argued his point very gently and reasonably. Later on Mr and Mrs Dundas (Dundas is the British Council representative in Delhi, going home on leave) told me how disgusted they were at the manners of the two over-prosperous Parsi gentlemen. It seems they (the two fat Parsis) had been boasting to other passengers how rich they were and that they had paid Rs 1 lakh as income-tax. Later on at lunch, the less aggressive of the two Parsis came and apologized to me for what had happened. I pointed out to him, very politely, that their behaviour had been most unseemly. If they were dissatisfied with any aspect of their government's policy, this was hardly the place and the company where they should shout about it.

6 June

Yesterday morning we reached Suez. It took full twelve hours for the ship to negotiate the Suez Canal. It sailed very slowly, guided by the pilot boat, with a convoy trailing behind. At one place it had to halt for more than two hours to allow passage to some tankers. The canal is cut through a desert and the right bank is sprinkled all along with pretty colonies, smart bungalows, pavilions, and green patches. Some spots are really pretty or so they seemed from the ship.

We reached Port Said at about 9 p.m. Maulana had already retired and had instructed me to allow no one to see him. So while other passengers went ashore, I mounted guard outside his cabin to perform the unpleasant duty of disappointing visitors. Fortunately there were not many - three Indian Muslims and Mr Rajwade, our counsel at Cairo, with his assistant. They had come all the way from Cairo, having driven over a hundred miles, and had been waiting for several hours. They were naturally much disappointed that they could not see Maulana. If they were annoyed, they were polite enough not to show their feelings.

8 June

It's very pleasant this morning, just the right nip in the air which me enjoys. It's not yet cold enough to put on a coat. A pullover is enough. I am using the cardigan which Niru<sup>2</sup> had made for me. Maulana has put on a pullover which I purchased for him yesterday at the shop. Maulana, I must say, is very considerate. He makes very few demands and talks very little. When he does, it is always a pleasure to listen to him. Nevertheless, being in attendance is a strain of some kind. He does not rest in the day and sits in the lounge continually from about 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sometimes I feel sleepy after lunch and would like nothing better than to get into a pyjama and lie down in my cabin with a book. But I dare not leave him alone in the lounge. It wouldn't look nice, even if he didn't mind.

The other day he talked of the negotiations leading to partition, and said that he was himself originally strongly opposed to Mountbatten's suggestion. So was Gandhiji. In fact Gandhiji had asked him more than once, "Will you stand firm with me right to the end?" He had assured him that he would. But, said Maulana, Sardar Patel was eager for partition. He was sick of the coalition government during the interim period. Liaquat Ali, as Finance Minister, was putting all sorts of obstacles in his way. Not even a *chaprasi* could be appointed by the Home Minister without the concurrence of the Finance Minister. So, Patel was anxious to get rid of the Muslim League block at any price. He converted Panditji and prevailed on Gandhiji not to oppose the proposal. So, finally,

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<sup>2</sup> Niru - Mrs. Nirmala Patwardhan, adopted daughter of Nandita and Krishna Kripalani

Mountbatten's scheme was accepted and the nation was partitioned with the consequences that everyone knows. Maulana was of the view that the Muslim community as a whole was worse off for the partition. Those who are in Pakistan had made a mess of their State, and those who are in India are no longer in a position to pull their weight. Had there been no partition, the Muslims would not only have had majority governments in Bengal, Punjab, North West Frontier Province and Sind, but could have had a considerable voice in the Central Government.

9 June

There is a Muslim girl on board who got in at Karachi, Mrs. Khan, rather chubby and jolly and reminds me of Shona.<sup>3</sup> It seems her parents are in Venezuela, where she was born. She was educated in London and is a graduate of London University. She is married to a naval officer who is being posted at the Pakistan High Commission in London. She is preceding him and wishes to join Lincoln's Inn. She came and talked to Maulana to plead with him not to shift the India Office Library from London. Maulana was amused at her sentimental, girlish arguments and was very sweet to her. She is an ardent feminist and had no words strong enough to condemn Mohammad Ali for his second marriage.

Amba is a Muslim and is or was a Turkish citizen. His father was a Muslim divine of considerable reputation who had also been to India more than once. He does not mention his father's name. When Maulana read the book in Delhi he was curious to know who the father was, since if he was as well-known as his son has made him out to be, he should know him. So I wrote to Amba care of his publishers to inquire about his father's full name. Amba wrote a very nice letter to Maulana giving full particulars of his father. Maulana immediately recognized him as the Turkish theologian who had come to India in the twenties, and had stayed as his guest at a Congress session. In Maulana's opinion he was not such a famous scholar as Amba's filial regard has made him to be. Amba is, at present, in Munich and expects to meet Maulana during our visit to Switzerland or West Germany. He began his career in Russia as an aviator and made a mark as an engineer. I am looking forward to seeing him.

Pearce Gervis insisted on my going through his manuscript of the new book he is taking to Cassell's on the Sadhus and Yogis of India. Maulana asked me what I was reading and what I thought of the manuscript. I told him what I felt. He readily agreed, because his own impression of Gervis is far from favourable. He had detected several errors in the book on Kashmir which no serious student of Indian history should make. Maulana thinks him to be a bore, which probably he is. Mrs. Dundas tells me that the foreign community in Delhi regards him as the "biggest bore" in the city! Maulana then started talking of Sir Francis Younghusband, whom he

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<sup>3</sup> Shona Miss Shona Ray, a designer then working in Delhi

knew personally. He told me of his campaign in Tibet and of his career in India, which I did not know so well. He must have been a very brave, intelligent and sensitive officer. It's such men as he who have been the real builders and bulwarks of the British Empire and the Commonwealth, and who have inspired respect for British character even among people who have violently resented British rule.

Maulana's memory for historical details is amazing. He must have been a very close student of Indian history in his young days. His knowledge of Arabic and Muslim lore is of course phenomenal. Yet he easily forgets simple facts and figures which as Minister should be on his fingertips. For example, he would, I am sure, be unable to say how many schools there are in Delhi or how many graduates are turned out by the Indian universities each year. I must have informed him at least six times during the time I have been with him that there are thirty-one universities in India and yet the other day he told a foreign ambassador that the number of universities in the country is twenty-nine.

The sea became a little playful yesterday evening. The Parsi boy who sits at my dining table hurriedly left after a few mouthfuls. Some ladies didn't turn up in the dining room. Fortunately Maulana kept well. I, too, didn't feel any particular discomfort except that I felt reluctant to wash clothes and iron my trousers before retiring.

13 June

Maulana keeps odd hours. He has his morning tea at 4 a.m. What he occupies himself with so early, I don't know. I have never been to his room so early. Very likely he reads or writes. At 9.30 a.m., after breakfast, when I went to his room he was fast asleep. He seems to enjoy a nap after breakfast. Give me an authentic Englishman or an authentic Indian, though if I were asked to define what exactly is an authentic Indian, I should find it difficult to define. I wouldn't consider an orthodox Hindu an authentic Indian, for he was perhaps authentic once and is, at present, an anachronism. An authentic Indian must represent the present culture and mood of India in transition. Nehru, Azad, and Radhakrishnan are all authentic, each in his own way.

*This article is based on conversations between the author and Dinkar Kowshik*

# Wit and Wisdom

*Mohammad Yunus*

I first met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in September 1937, when he, along with Dr Rajendra Prasad, came to Abbotabad in the then North West Frontier Province. In view of the British Government's ban on Badshah Khan's entry into the Frontier, the Congress Working Committee deputed them to visit the Province and deliberate with the local leaders about the formation of a Congress Ministry. Ever since then and till his death on 22nd February 1958, I used to visit him regularly at home and in his office. He was always very kind and considerate, he used to tell Jawaharlalji that every time I entered his room, he felt as if I was going to ask him a very urgent question. "Yunus possesses very questioning eyes," used to be his favourite comment.

A great deal is going to be written about Maulana Sahib's literary genius and political foresight. His steadfast loyalty to certain ideals, even in the face of abuse and physical attack on his person, did not deter him from his chosen path. He was essentially a detached person, but became entangled in the hub of political turbulence. He was a great aristocrat and a perfect gentleman, who never used an indecent remark against his political opponents.

Having watched him closely for over two decades, it is not difficult to talk about him. His writings and speeches inspired me, like they did many others in the country, and provided me with the political vocabulary to enter into a lively debate with an adversary. He was a great orator and some of his speeches were epoch-making, and still continue to be relevant. Given below are my recollections from having been present at two of those occasions, one just after the partition, and the other in 1923.

Maulana had been called all sorts of names by the Muslim League leaders in pre-partition India. Consequently, the Muslim voters had shunned him completely.<sup>1</sup> But when the country was partitioned, they found themselves in an intolerable situation. The entire League leadership

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<sup>1</sup> Under the British, only ten per cent of the population had voting rights.

had run away, like rats, to Pakistan and left to their fate those who had rallied around them. They stood deprived of any direction and presented a pathetic picture. They sought succour, and knocked at Maulana's door to lead them out of their misery. Having conceded their request, Maulana addressed a large congregation at Delhi's Jama Masjid on 16 October, 1947. His oratory and passion made that speech a memorable event in history.

Do you remember that when I called out to you, you slashed my tongue? When I raised my pen, you clipped my hands, when I tried to walk, you sawed off my feet; and when I wanted to turn, you broke my back. Now I see fear and despair writ large on your faces, and your hearts are filled with disappointment. Please recall the wrongs that have been perpetrated during the last few years, and the mistaken part you played in all that. Let me tell you that just as your earlier enthusiasm was pointless, your fears today are, similarly, without any foundation. You are fleeing from your homes and calling it *Hijrat*. This is absurd. My advice to you is that instead of running away, you should strengthen your hearts, eschew this suspicion and inaction, and face the realities with courage. No one respects a coward.

Maulana was a firm believer in the Hindu-Muslim unity and had no hesitation to declare as early as 1923 at the Congress Session held in Delhi,

Even if an angel descending from the clouds were to declare from the top of the Qutab Minar of Delhi that *Swaraj* will be achieved within twenty-four hours if Hindu-Muslim unity was given up, I would prefer to sacrifice *Swaraj* rather than Hindu-Muslim unity, for delay in the attainment of *Swaraj* will be a loss to India alone, but if our unity is lost, it will be a loss to the entire humanity.

The happenings in the subcontinent as a result of that discord, and the strains it has caused in the international community are before us today. The division of India was supposed to solve the communal problem. Instead, it got aggravated. The tensions created at that time persist, and with the emergence of Bangladesh, Pakistan itself was carved up. The people in the three countries stand divided, but more so the Muslims of the subcontinent. It has even posed a problem for the Muslim countries, who are always inhibited about acknowledging the extent of their friendship with India or with Pakistan. Maulana Azad's warning in 1923, was to avoid such a tragedy. The various Military Pacts and the interest shown by the Super Powers in our internal affairs is also due to the division of India in 1947. Now one can only hope and pray that sanity will return among those who have so much in common.



After Independence, Maulana Azad curtailed his political activities to a minimum, and restricted his social life to meeting a very limited number of people. Many of those who knew him closely are not alive. I, therefore, consider myself fortunate to have had access to him through Badshah Khan and Jawaharlalji. In this article I will use that link to write about certain episodes and encounters that I witnessed, or accounts I heard from his very close and intimate colleagues. I have written about some of them in my book *Persons, Passions and Politics*, some are being written for the first time - twelve episodes in all. I am quoting Maulana's words in Urdu to convey the flavour of his language and his actual thoughts or reactions to a situation.

At the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bardoli in December, 1941, the top leadership faced a mental dilemma. Discussions lasted for over a week, and many pros and cons of violence versus non-violence were reviewed and examined. The desirability or not, of extending support to the British War Effort was under consideration. Congress High Command was keen to play a meaningful role in support of the British, but wished to know how this would apply to India after the war came to an end. Gandhiji had a different view. For him non-violence was not something to be bartered away for any gain whatsoever.

The opinion expressed by most of the members clearly showed that they were in two minds about the party's stand. Gandhiji stood for non-violence, no-matter-what, while some felt that supporting the British War Effort would not mean rejection of the concept of non-violence. On this issue, Badshah Khan tendered his resignation from the Working Committee since he, too, was for total non-violence. Maulana was the President, and it was his responsibility to sum up the long proceedings. Sitting in a chair next to Gandhiji, he suddenly pointed his finger towards him and recited the following Urdu couplet:

*Is fikr main baitha hun, akhir mujhe kya karna,  
Dilbar se juda hona, ya dil se juda hona?*

Lost in the torments of choice, I wonder,  
Must I forsake the call of my heart or that of my beloved?

Jawaharlalji was completely overwhelmed by this couplet, and felt that nothing could have better expressed the dilemma of the members. They were torn between their regard for Gandhiji's views and their own apprehensions about the Nazi-Axis menace. I remember how he rushed out of the meeting and asked me to write down that couplet in Roman. Later, I discovered that he included those lines in several letters he wrote to his friends during his stay at Bardoli.

After his release from detention during the Individual Satyagraha Movement, on 19th December, 1941, Maulana addressed a public meeting at Chowpatty in Bombay. Jawaharlalji was also present. The Japanese



victories and their advance towards Burma had led large number of people to flee from Calcutta and other towns in the Eastern region. Maulana upbraided them for running away and remonstrated with them in an amusing manner. He said that war was spreading and tragic events were occurring all over the world. He continued further,

There are many among us who are apprehensive about the possibility of Calcutta being bombed. In case that happens, the bombs may fall in areas where you are not living. Then why this running around? The bomb may fall in your area, but not on your house. Then why should you be so frightened? And then if one falls on your house, it may not explode, or you may not be inside at that moment. Why, then, all this panic? In any case have you got a divine guarantee that you will not die if you escape such an attack?

He then appealed to the people to regain their confidence and face the situation with courage, because "running away will not lessen your agony."

In June of 1945, after their release following the Quit India Movement, Maulana Azad, Jawaharlalji and Badshah Khan visited Kashmir. Indiraji was already there, and all of us spent a few memorable weeks together. I showed Maulana the manuscript of my book, *Kaidi ke Khat*, "Letters from Prison", and found that Mr. Asaf Ali had already spoken to him about it. Azad was intrigued that those letters were not addressed to any person, but were meant to serve as a record of my days spent in jail. After two years of that holiday in Kashmir, his jail memoirs appeared in the form of *Ghubar-i-Khatir*. Once, I found him going through the first edition, making some corrections for the forthcoming one. I asked him whether he could lend it to me for a few days. He not only presented me the book, but also inscribed it affectionately. His Secretary, Ajmal Khan, who was present on the occasion, offered to give me another copy after a few days, so that he could take action on the corrected one. But Maulana disagreed and said, *Di hui cheez wapas nahin lee jati. Main dusree kitab par durustee kar dunga*. "One cannot take back a gift. I will make those corrections on another copy." (facsimile p 144)

Soon after Independence, the Cabinet discussed the question of imposing a ban on officials accepting invitations from industrialists in the country. Sardar Patel was opposed to such a ban and said,

By accepting a dinner or a lunch invitation officials cannot be bought over to comply with the host's bidding.

Maulana listened quietly to the arguments, then looking towards Sardar, he said,

*Mian yeh nahin keh raha ki officer log khana kha kar koi najat kam*

غزیری محمد یونس خان

ابوالکلام  
دہلی ۳ مارچ ۱۹۴۷ء  
غبارِ خاطر

قلعہ احمد نگر کی اسیری راز ۹ اگست ۱۹۴۲ء تا ۱۵ جون ۱۹۴۵ء  
کے زمانے کی بعض تحریر

امین

ابوالکلام آزاد

*karenge, magar is main shak nahin ke aankh to gir hi jati hai*

I don't say that after eating at their table, the officials will do anything illegal, but there is no doubt that they would become vulnerable and that their eyes will be cast down in embarrassment

As Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Jawaharlal Nehru used to consult Maulana about relations with Muslim countries. He was once asked for advice about whom to appoint as Consul in Jeddah. Maulana suggested the name of an Arabic scholar, Maulana Abdul Majid Harire of Benaras. The Under-Secretary dealing with personnel in the Ministry, was one M.K. Narayanan, who had never heard of this Maulana, but had read about Prof. Abdul Majid, who used to issue statements in the *The Tribune* against the Muslim League. Thus the Professor was sent for and got the job meant for another Majid!

Prof. Majid, a known atheist, was the wrong choice as Consul for a conservative and orthodox country. He managed to arouse a great deal of hatred against himself, and this obliged the Ministry, in 1949, to transfer him to Meshed in Iran. Soon after came an economy drive, and the office in Meshed was abolished. On getting those orders, the not too learned Professor was taken aback, and, in a lengthy telegram pleaded with the Ministry that since he had all along fought for India's Independence, he would rather die than lower the National Flag in a foreign country! This telegram was submitted to Maulana Sahib for advice. To start with, he was naturally annoyed over the appointment *faua pas*, and now this false bravado. So he wrote,

*Agar is kambakht ko marna hi hai to khake watan main ake mare  
Bahar mar kar kyun apni hasti mitana chahta hai?*

If this wretch is bent upon dying, then let him do so on his native soil. Why does he want to perish in a foreign land?

Maulana was one of those Congress leaders who were quite allergic to the galaxy of I.C.S. bureaucrats, who still thought they ruled India. He determinedly prevented any of its members from occupying the Secretary's post in the Ministry of Education. In this connection I am reminded of his caustic comment about them to someone

*Sardar Patel ne bhi kaha aur Jawaharlal bhi kahte hain key kisi  
I.C.S. ko kaga lena chahiye. Magar main ne to saaf saaf keh  
diya hai ki yahan talim ka kam hai, aur is key liye parhe likhe  
log chaahiyen*

Sardar Patel had said, and Jawaharlal also keeps asking me to appoint an I.C.S. officer. But I have told them, very clearly,

that this is the field of education, and here I can only have an educated person!

It may interest readers to know that in keeping with this policy, the following renowned educationists became Secretaries or Advisers in the Ministry of Education during the first twelve years Dr Tara Chand, Prof Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, Humayun Kabir, K G Saïyidain and Prof M S Thacker

Acharya J.B. Kripalani, who was known for his sarcasm, once told me, "Forget your Frontier links and become a Kashmiri Pandit if you want to achieve something." When I mentioned this to Jawaharlalji at the breakfast table, he wanted to know the background I told him that if a Minister belongs to a Southern state, then he prefers to appoint officials of the same area to the various posts in his Ministry, and if he is from Bengal or Punjab, then those selected usually hail from there Indiraji and Feroze were also present, and they too nodded in agreement

As usual, after breakfast, Jawaharlalji went to his office room in Teen Murti House I was about to leave when Feroze saw Seshan, the Private Secretary, enter that room carrying a telephone directory Feroze guessed correctly and asked me to wait Indiraji, Feroze, and I stood near the staircase We saw Jawaharlalji come out and with a smile on his face, said, "You were right. I have verified this from the pages relating to the Central Ministries in the telephone directory "

After a few days I visited Maulana He greeted me very warmly and said, "I am glad you spoke to Jawaharlal about the growth of provincialism " I was unable to grasp the meaning at first till he added, *Ai ey bhai wohi baat, ke har wazir apne sube ke logon ko hi bharti kar leta hai* "Its about your telling Jawaharlal that every minister prefers officials from his or her own region." It was then that I remembered and realised, that a casual remark by me had prompted Jawaharlalji to look into the whole malaise He had evidently emphasized to his cabinet colleagues, the ugly impact of such a policy, and asked them to be more rational in appointments He was candid enough to admit that even the Ministry of External Affairs under him was suffering from the same disease!

Maulana's sister, Fatima Begum *Arzoo* from Bhopal once came to stay with him in his Delhi home on Maulana Azad Road Because of Maulana's unusual working hours they could not meet for several days However, one day, they crossed each other's path in the central portion of the house Maulana in his typical punctilious manner enquired when she had come, and whether she was staying in the North or South end of the house! Fatima Begum was flabbergasted, and replied that she had been there for over a week and pointing to a room, said in a low tone, *Main us kamre mein thehree hun, magar mujhe yeh pata nahin ke wo shimal mein hai ya junub mein*. "I am staying in that room, but I don't know whether it is

in the North or the South ” Later, he was himself greatly amused over the encounter and so was Jawaharlalji, who heard it straight from the horse’s mouth <sup>2</sup>

Once someone from Lucknow came to visit Maulana. In his formal style Maulana asked him to sit on the chair lying vacant. The guest enquired whether Maulana Sahib had recognised him, and he replied politely, *Han mere bhai, main ne achhi tarah pehchan liya hai* “Yes, my brother, I know you very well ” At this, the persistent Johnny enquired, *Mera naam kya hai?* “What is my name?” Quick came the exasperated retort, *Aap ka naam hai namakool, aur ab aap ja sakte hain* “Your name is Mr Uncouth, and you can now leave right away ”

Maulana was a great scholar of Arabic, and his translation of eighteen Suras of the Quran into Urdu remains a unique and classic achievement. His scholarly association from early childhood, with Arab literary circles had given him a superb vocabulary in that language. I remember the reaction of the first Egyptian Ambassador, who after meeting Maulana and having spoken to him in Arabic, said, “I was talking to Maulana Azad in the colloquial language, but listening to him I felt as if he was reciting verses from the Quran. So classical was his style of speaking that he must have regarded me as illiterate ”

Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India wanted to greet Maulana on Eid. The request was conveyed verbally to Ajmal Khan, who sought his boss’s agreement. Maulana told his Secretary, *Mere talukat Rajen Babu se aise nahin key woh mere sath aisa takalluf barten* . “My relations with Rajen Babu are not such that he should have to observe formalities with me ” When this was conveyed to the President’s office, they were completely rattled, because the visit was already printed in his daily programme. So they insisted that the meeting should take place. When informed, Maulana said, *Agar aisi baat hai to woh apni motor mein baith kar idhar se guzar jayen* . “If so, then let him drive past my house ” This suggestion unnerved the Presidential staff even more. Eventually Jawaharlalji had to intervene to make that call possible!

As indicated above, Maulana steadily became reluctant to meet people. This fact was widely known and frequently commented upon. He used to keep his presence at the Cabinet Meetings to a minimum. Once Jawaharlalji asked him to meet some people on the two Eids, and invite to his house a few of those who wanted to see him. Maulana Sahib agreed and asked his Secretary to arrange lunch for sixty people on a certain Eid day.

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<sup>2</sup> Maulana’s relatives — living and dead. Khairuddin - father, Aliya - mother, Zuleikha - wife, Haseen - son ( who died at the age of four) three sisters - Zainab Begum, Fatima Begum Arzoo, and Hanifa Begum Abroo, Ghulam Yasin - brother, whose only son Nuruddin, was born posthumously in 1906 and is the only direct descendent still alive.

Jawaharlalji, along with Indiraji, Feroze and myself, arrived at the appointed time, and found Maulana Sahib puffing his cigarette. Ajmal Khan was scurrying around most anxiously. Having noticed his uneasiness, Feroze and I asked him the cause for his anxiety. Ajmal Khan told us that not a single guest had arrived. When asked to show us the list of those invited, he said *Main ne to kisi ko bulaya nahin Hum to yeh samajhte they ke Panditji sab ko madoo karenge* "I have not invited anybody, as I was under the impression that Panditji was going to do the inviting." So the five of us sat to do justice to the meal which was intended for a whole battalion! The food was delicious, but the inertia of Maulana's staff turned a joyous occasion into a big embarrassment.

Azad's relations with Jawaharlalji remained most cordial throughout a long association. As partners in the freedom struggle and later as colleagues in the Government, they worked closely together and held each other in great esteem. Jawaharlalji used to visit him every now and then to discuss knotty problems and seek his advice, knowing perfectly well that Maulana had no personal axe to grind and would not take it as an offence if his view on a particular subject was not accepted. There are several incidents to show the depth of this relationship and their concern for each other. I am, however, tempted to include one that took place at Wardha during a Working Committee meeting. Jawaharlalji complained about mosquitoes, and his Secretary undertook to get rid of them. The next night, while sitting inside the mosquito-net in the small courtyard of Guest House No. 1, Jawaharlalji saw his Secretary circling around his bed and applying mosquito repellent oil in every single hole of the net. At first he was angry, then burst out laughing. He narrated the incident about "Operation Mosquito" to Maulana Sahib, who was staying in the room next door. On hearing his friend's plight, he said, *Arey mere bhai, meri tarah tum bhi kamre mein pankhe ke neeche so jao aur in sab musibaton se chhutkara pao*. ("Oh my brother, follow my example and sleep inside underneath the fan and be spared of all these irritants.")

This incident was reported to Jamnalal Bajaj, who was hosting the Working Committee members at Wardha. He was quite upset, and after offering profuse apologies for the lapse, very graciously, provided his distinguished guest with a table fan.

Dr. B C Roy was another one of Maulana's old friends. I recall that when news of Maulana's illness was conveyed to Jawaharlalji, he was also informed that Dr. Roy had, that very time, left Delhi for Calcutta. So he sent a message to him to come back immediately to look after Maulana. Dr. Roy dashed back in the same plane that had flown him to Calcutta. I was a witness to how he remained on his feet that whole day and night without eating or drinking, and leaving only after pronouncing that his lifelong friend was no more. In between he would come over and tell me in a whisper how painful it was for a doctor to treat a dear friend sinking

hopelessly before his eyes. At one point, he even told me that Maulana's heart had stopped functioning, but that his brain was still alive.

Jawaharlalji was pacing in and around the room where Maulana lay in a critical state. When I called him around 2 a.m., that the end was near, he arrived within a few minutes. In order not to waste time dressing up, he had turned up in his light brown khadi pyjama suit, with an achken worn on top. Soon after that, Pantji, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Maulana Hifzur-Rehman, and a few other colleagues also arrived. A hurried consultation was held, and it was decided to bury Maulana outside the Jama Masjid in Delhi. His funeral took place with full military honours later in the day.

Thus ended a unique chapter in our history. Maulana left no visible assets, no bank account, no other worldly belongings. A car purchased out of a government advance was taken over by his nephew, who paid the balance which was due from him. His wardrobe consisted of a few cotton and woollen achkans, a dozen khadi kurta pyjamas, two pairs of sandals, an old dressing gown, and a worn out hair brush. One could not find two cups of the same type in the pantry. The only thing he had in plenty were books<sup>3</sup>, and an extraordinary intellect was his most valuable possession. Material comforts did not matter for a *Meer-i-Karvan*, which is the best epithet one can use for Maulana. To quote Iqbal:

*Nigah buland, sukhan dilnawaz, jaan pursoz,  
Yehi hai rakht-e-safar mir-e-karvan ke liye*

A soaring vision, dulcet speech, and courage in strife  
That is all one needs to lead the caravan of life'

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<sup>3</sup> Maulana donated his entire collection to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations Library.





## **PART IV**

### **Critical Evaluations**



# Journalistic Career

*S.M.H. Burney*

James Augustus Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta Journal Advertiser* on January 29, 1780 dates the beginnings of Indian journalism at the end of the eighteenth century. The first newspaper in Urdu, *Jam-i-Jehan Numa*, a weekly edited by Munshi Sada Sukh Mirzapuri was published from Calcutta on March 27, 1822. A column in Persian was added to it from May 15. This paper became so popular that after the first two issues, from May 29, it was brought out completely in Persian. The next landmark was the publication of a weekly *Urdu Akhbar* from Delhi on January 1, 1837 edited by Maulvi Mohammad Baqar, father of Mohammad Hussain Azad (1830-1910), who became a pioneer of modern Urdu literature. In 1841, Syed Mohammad Khan, elder brother of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), launched another important weekly *Syed-ul-Akhbar* from Delhi edited by Syed Abdul Ghafoor. During the freedom struggle of 1857, several Urdu newspapers disappeared. Prominent among those which continued publication were *Kohinoor* (Lahore) of Munshi Harsukh Rai (1850-1904), the first daily newspaper *Urdu Guide* (Calcutta) of Maulvi Kabiruddin (1857), *Paisa Akhbar* (Lahore) of Munshi Mahboob Alam (1858-1924), and Munshi Naval Kishore's weekly *Avadh Akhbar* (Lucknow) which was converted into a daily in 1874.

Creative journalism, however, begins with Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who published his journal *Scientific Society* (1866), and *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaque* (1870). According to Shanti Ranjan Bhattacharya, about five hundred newspapers and journals in Urdu were published from different parts of India during the period from 1822 to 1899.

It is in the context of this background that Abul Kalam Azad embarked on his journalistic career at an incredible age of eleven. He made his debut in 1899, with *Nairang-e-Alam*, a monthly poetic journal, which ran for three to four months. At the end of 1900, he was persuaded by a press-owner Mohd Musa to edit a weekly newspaper, *Al-Misbah*. This lasted for three to four months. It carried Azad's articles on such subjects as

“Al-Ghazali” “Newton and Law of Gravity”, and one on “Id Festival” (reproduced in *Paisa Akhbar* and other papers) In May 1902, he contributed an article on the power of the press to *Makhzan* (Lahore), a leading literary magazine edited by Sir Abdul Qadir (1874-1950) Azad's most cherished ideal at the point of time was the editorship of a paper of his very own Meanwhile he edited newly added prose section of a monthly poetic journal *Khadang-e-Nazar* published in Lucknow by Munshi Naubat Rai Nazar

On the basis of his comments on the proposed Muslim Press Conference in *Lisan-ul-Sidq*, it appears that for a short while he edited another paper *Edward Gazette* of Shahjehanpur sometime between 1902 and 1903 Early in 1903<sup>1</sup>, he was associated with *Ahsan-al-Akhbar*, a weekly from Calcutta edited by Maulvi Syed Ahmad Hasan Fatehpuri His article “Islam and Muharram” which sharply attacked the rituals connected with Muharram provoked strong reactions among the local Shias<sup>2</sup>

In the true sense, Azad's journalistic career started when he launched his first regular journal *Lisan-ul-Sidq*, which was published from November 28, 1903, to May of 1905 It was intended to be a weekly journal, but because of financial difficulties and Azad's own illness, the weekly had an irregular publication history, only twelve issues (eight combined issues for several weeks) appeared during the period of its publication Azad clearly set out the objects of the journal, first, social reform of the Muslim community, secondly, promotion of Urdu particularly in Bengal, thirdly, cultivation of literary taste amongst the intelligentsia, and fourthly, critical review of literary works *Lisan-ul-Sidq* reflects his commitment to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas of social and educational reforms He wanted to make the journal a venture of high literary order The articles show a refined literary taste, and were written in terse and straightforward Urdu prose, its main focus was literature

Even at a relatively young age, Azad recognized the importance of Urdu and made his journal almost an organ of *Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu* He realised the necessity of establishing the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for higher education, and thus anticipated some of the eminent educationists who later concluded that the mother tongue was the most suitable medium of instruction

Another distinctive feature of this journal was its attempt to raise the standard of literary criticism In fact, he wanted to bring out a separate journal entitled *Review*, a literary supplement, but this did not materialise To have thought of it in the first decade of this century shows how Azad,

<sup>1</sup> Abid Reza Bedar, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, (Rampur) Institute of Oriental Studies, 1968, p 79

<sup>2</sup> *Azad ki Kahani Khud Azad ki Zabani*, as dictated to Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, Calcutta, 1959

as a journalist, was far ahead of his time. He wanted books to be reviewed with candour and objectivity. That is why he defended Sir Syed and Maulana Hali (1837-1914) in his rejoinder to the review of Hali's biography of Sir Syed, *Hayat-i-Javid*. The book had been criticised without appropriate justification by Habib-ur-Rehman Sherwani and Abdul Qadir in *Aligarh Gazette* and *Makhzan* respectively<sup>3</sup>.

The articles in *Lisan-ul-Sidq* reflect Azad's progressive and modern views on the subject of education which he believed was the key to social reforms. He was concerned about disseminating scientific ideas among the educated, and in this he wanted Urdu to play a vital role. Hence the emphasis on translating in Urdu the scientific and philosophic works of Bacon, Newton and Darwin. He wanted to develop a spirit of enquiry among his readers<sup>4</sup>. He believed that this could pave the way for the regeneration of the Muslim society. Unfortunately, this journal closed down because of financial difficulties. Twenty years later Azad was to say about this journal "It was only a childhood game!"

It was as the editor of *Lisan-ul-Sidq* that Azad gained recognition among the Muslim intelligentsia. They were amazed to see a raw youth of about fourteen producing a literary journal of such high calibre, appreciated widely, both for its contents and format. Maulana Hali could not believe that Azad was the editor of *Lisan-ul-Sidq*.

Azad's association with Shibli Numani (1857-1914), a historian, poet, critic, biographer, and an outstanding scholar of Persian, Arabic and Urdu, marked a turning point in his intellectual development. Since 1899, Azad had been corresponding with Shibli on religious and literary matters. Shibli, it may be recalled, was most impressed with Azad's article on X-ray published in *Khadang-e-Nazar*. They met for the first time in 1905 in Bombay. Shibli invited Azad to Lucknow to assist him in the editing of *Al-Nadwa*, an organ of *Nadwat-ul-Ulema*. It was a journal of Islamic theology and civilization. Azad's association with *Al-Nadwa* from October, 1905 to March, 1906 gave him great prestige among Muslim scholars and divines<sup>5</sup>. During this period he made a special study of the Holy Quran and Islamic history. He contributed several articles including "The Muslims' Store of Knowledge and Guardianship of Europe", "Judiciary in Islamic Countries", and "Women's Rights"<sup>6</sup>. In the latter

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<sup>3</sup> *Lisan-ul-Sidq*, February, 1904.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, August-September, 1904.

<sup>5</sup> According to Bedar, Azad probably worked in *Al-Nadwa* from July, 1905. Ian Henderson Douglas, in *Abul Kalam Azad, An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, is wrong in implying that Azad edited *Al-Nadwa* during that period. The fact is that none of the issues of the journal during this period bore his name on the Editorial Board.

<sup>6</sup> This was a translation-cum-review of the pamphlet on Muslim women entitled *Al-Mar'at al-Muslīma* by the Egyptian scholar Farid Wajdi.

article he advocated a middle path, based on Islamic teachings, between the freedom in Europe and the restrictions in the East. Compared to his writings in *Lisan-ul-Sidq*, his articles in *Al-Nadwa* show wider range and finer craftsmanship.

Meanwhile, at the repeated request of the proprietor of the renowned paper *Vakil* from Amritsar, Shaikh Ghulam Muhammad, Azad edited the paper from April, 1906 to November, 1906. His brother's illness at Calcutta called him back home. His second spell as editor of *Vakil* covered the period from August/September, 1907 to August, 1908. He wrote articles on Aligarh, Turkish and Egyptian political situation. He changed the paper to a bi-weekly, and its circulation increased almost by double. This paper brought him close to the issues in Indian politics and gave him experience on the national level. However, due to certain differences with the proprietor of the paper, he decided to leave.

On his return to Calcutta, after his first spell with *Vakil*, Azad revived the weekly *Dar-ul-Saltanat* in January 1907, under pressure from its proprietor Mohammad Yusuf. There was a period of lull in the life of Azad from 1908 to 1912. During this period he read extensively. His father, who represented narrow sectarianism and opposed modern knowledge, had died. Azad was now free to chart his own course. He had acquired rich experience in editing standard journals and newspapers, and had gained respect as a writer in literary circles. His experience in reading and writing enabled him to handle the Urdu language with a rare skill and artistry.

It was Azad's visit to Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and France in 1908/1909 which widened his intellectual horizon and formed his political ethos. In the Middle Eastern countries he came in contact with the Iranian and Arab revolutionaries, and "The Young Turks", the followers of Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938) (Earlier, he had met the Hindu revolutionaries through Shyam Sundar Chakravarti at Calcutta). This visit convinced him that Muslims in India should not stay away from the mainstream of Indian politics. It is important to remember that in the formation of his political ideas he had been deeply influenced by the political activism of Jamaluddin-al-Afghani (1839-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). Jamaluddin-al-Afghani was a revolutionary who saw Islam as a great force in history, and a world religion which was capable of adapting itself to the needs of changing times. He was a Pan-Islamist and a liberal reformer who was vehemently opposed to Western education. In his "Refutation of the Materialists" (CA 1880), he demonstrated that the modernization of Egypt was not only compatible with, but contingent upon the retention of the rightly interpreted ancestral faith<sup>7</sup>. Azad called him, "The greatest man in the last days of Islam".

Abduh was another influential Islamic reformer of the late 19th/early

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<sup>7</sup> G E von Grunebaum, *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, London, 1966, p. 187.



20th century. A follower of Al-Afghani, he, too, stood against Western domination and wanted Islam to be restored to its original form. He published a journal in Arabic *Al-Urwat Al-Wuthqa* from Paris in the 1880's. His follower Rashid Rida (1865-1935), carried his ideas further by emphasising the importance of Islam as a means for uplifting the Muslim ethos. The influence of these three religious philosophers is strongly reflected in Azad's writings. Azad was also influenced by the contemporary Arabic especially Egyptian press. At the office of *Ahsan-al-Akhbar* he used to get the Arabic newspapers and journals.

Journalism in Egypt began in the 19th century, due to French influence following Napoleon's invasion (1798). The first paper in the Arab world was *Al-Waqai Al-Misria*, published in 1828. During his stay in Egypt, from 1871 to 1879, Jamaluddin-Al-Afghani caused an intellectual and literary revolution. His follower Adib Ishaq, together with Salim Naqqash, launched a paper *Al-Mahroosa* from Alexandria, around 1881. Meanwhile, Salim and Basharat Taqla started the renowned paper *Al-Ahram* in 1875 which is still the most popular and prestigious Arabic newspaper. Other important papers included *Al-Liwa* (1900), of the ardent patriot Mustafa Kamil, *Al-Jarida* (1907), of Ahmad Latifi Al-Syed, and weeklies such as *Al-Muwayyed* (1889), of Sheikh Ali Yusuf, *Al-Manar* of Sheikh Rashid Rida, *Al-Muqqatam* (1889), and lastly *Al-Hilal* (1892) of Georgie Zaidan. While political issues were the principal focus of most of these newspapers and magazines, *Al-Hilal* blazed a new trail. It emphasized the literary, cultural and scientific trends in Egypt and elsewhere. It pioneered the improvement in the printing processes, and in the management of distribution and circulation channels. In short, it ushered in a new era in Egyptian journalism. While *Al-Hilal* was more popular, *Al-Muwayyed* had a higher standard as a cultural and literary journal. A distinguishing feature of the Egyptian press was its opinion columns on political, social, and cultural issues, and it was these columns rather than the news coverage which were given prominence. The dominant idea in the Egyptian press during this period was nationalism and anti-colonialism.

Azad named several of his papers after Arabic papers. For example, *Al-Misbah* was named after the Arabic *Al-Misbah* (1880-1908), edited by Naqula Naqqash, and subsequently, *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh* and *Al-Jamia* were also named after Arabic papers.

At home, the political life of the Muslims was moribund during the first decade of the twentieth century. Throughout the campaign against the partition of Bengal, provoked by Lord Curzon's high handed policy, the Muslims kept themselves aloof as silent spectators. Meanwhile, the Muslim League was set up as the counter group to the Indian National Congress. Despite the social and educational reforms launched by Sir Syed, the Muslim community remained backward. The exception to this was the

landed gentry who collaborated with the British for the gratification of their own petty interests Sir Valentine Chirol wrote in 1910 in his *Indian Unrest*:

It may be confidently asserted that never before have the Mohammedans of India, as a whole, identified their interests and their aspirations so closely as at the present day, with the consolidation and performance of British rule.

Azad was unhappy about the contemporary Muslim politics. His association with the extremists in Bengal and his tour of the Middle Eastern countries had created a change in his political outlook. It turned him into an ardent patriot who was deeply concerned about the suffering of his fellow countrymen under the ignoble tyranny of foreign servitude. The condition of the Muslims in Africa, Middle East and Turkey was no better. Morocco had yielded to France, Iran was threatened by Russia, and Turkey, "the old man of Europe", was threatened by Russia, England, and France.

After leaving *Vakil*, Azad explored the possibility of launching an independent paper of his own. Having considered the circumstances prevailing in India and the Muslim world, he took a momentous decision and launched *Al-Hilal* in July, 1912.

*Al-Hilal* bears the stamp of Azad's personality in all aspects. It was, in fact, a one-man show. He handled the entire management of the paper, funds, printing, producing articles, and the obtaining of national and international news and other material for his readers. He clearly stated that he was not motivated by commercial or selfish interests. He was unwilling to accept donations even when the paper faced acute financial difficulties. He thought that any external help would jeopardise the independence of his paper. With such meagre resources at his disposal, his performance as editor was unique. He was assisted by scholars like Syed Suleman Nadwi, Abdulla Imadi and Abdul Salam Nadwi.

*Al-Hilal* was the first illustrated weekly of Urdu and was published in type borrowed from Turkey. He made every effort to make it a journal of quality and distinction. He writes in *Al-Hilal* of 20th July, 1912, "Keeping the model of the English press in view we have started this journal in the Urdu language." This is not entirely true because Azad had modelled his journal on the pattern of the Arabic especially Egyptian papers. He did, however, draw upon the Western press for news and views.

The mission of *Al-Hilal* was to arouse the Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam which advocates revolt against oppression, and to emphasize the teaching, *AMR BI'L MA'RUF WA'L NAHY AN AL-MUNKAR* (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil). He made an impassioned appeal to the Muslims:

Oh! that I had the Archangel's trumpet so that I could take it up

on the high peaks of the mountains and blow a blast on it, a blast that could roar like a thunder and shake and awake those who are still slumbering shamefully. From that height all would shout, "Wake up, for you have slept too long." Arise, because your God wants you to arise now. What has happened to you that you look up to this miserable world, and do not heed He who gave you life, not death, who gives you success, not failure, who covered you with honour, not dishonour.

It was truly a *cri de coeur*. Muslim society, he thought, needed a revolutionary change which could be brought about only through a revival of Islam. In his view, Islam was a system complete in itself, which governed every aspect of life. Not the Islam preached, propagated, and interpreted by the commentators, but the true spirit of Islam which was the only way to solve the nation's problems; Islam as embodied in the Quran. That is why *Al-Hilal* is concerned primarily with the interpretation of the Quran.

A profound scholar of Islamic history, he also understood the influence of the *Ulema* on the Muslim society. Thus his first task was to infuse the spirit of Islam among the *Ulema*, so that they could regenerate the Muslim society. Azad also went a step further. In order to rejuvenate the Muslim society, he initiated through the pages of *Al-Hilal* a scheme for the setting up of *Hizbullah* (Party of God), fired with the true spirit of Islam. Later, in October, 1915, he set up *Dar-ul-Irshad* (Institute of Guidance) at Calcutta for the training of *Hizbullah* volunteers.

The plight of Muslims saddened him. One of the pressing needs of the day was to unite the Muslims by imbibing in them the true spirit of Islam. He believed that the Muslim society was divided and degenerate, dispirited and disorganised, riddled with rituals and obsolete customs. It needed leadership, which only Islam could provide. He toyed with the idea of appointing an *Imam* (leader of the Muslim community) and fixing on him the responsibility of uniting the Muslims of India and guiding them to organize their life on sound Islamic principles. For various reasons, however, it did not take concrete shape.

In the name of religion, he appealed to the Muslims to join the struggle for the freedom of the country. Through the pages of *Al-Hilal*, he tried to wean them from loyalty to the British Government as preached by Sir Syed and the leaders of the Muslim League. He awakened the Muslims from their political and moral lethargy and aroused political consciousness. Azad had great admiration for Sir Syed. But in *Al-Hilal* we find a complete change in his attitude. Sir Syed had exhorted the Muslims in their own interest to co-operate with the British and keep themselves aloof from politics. He had dissuaded them from joining the Indian National Congress. For Azad, Islam and politics were inseparable. He

considered Sir Syed's views obsolete, and his politics irrelevant. He interpreted political independence in the context of Islam. Addressing the Muslims, he wrote in *Al-Hilal*, "For Hindus to fight for independence was a patriotic act but for Muslims it was certainly a religious duty". He also emphasized that submission should be to God alone. He believed that the Muslims' loyalty to the British was un-Islamic, uncalled for, and unworthy of any self-respecting people.

Azad always identified issues at home and abroad which could arouse anti-British feelings among the Muslims. He, therefore, used the Italian invasion of Tripoli in October, 1911, the Balkan war of 1912-1913, and first World War in which Turkey joined the Central powers as an ally, to provoke the Muslims in India to revolt against their imperialist rulers. He also used the episode of demolition of Kanpur mosque in 1913, as a means of creating resentment against the British bureaucracy.

It was not only the national scene of Muslim politics which occupied his attention, he looked at the international scene as well and regarded the Muslims living in the world constituting a single fraternity. *Al-Hilal* focuses on the plight of the Muslims, particularly in the countries subjected to oppression by the imperial powers. A large portion of the paper consisted of accounts of the suffering of the Muslims in Middle Eastern countries and Turkey at the hands of European powers. National issues were relegated to a secondary position in the earlier issues of *Al-Hilal*.

To bring Muslims out of their secluded and sequestered life of political isolation in order to join the mainstream of national struggle, his first task was to free them from the "pathological fear of the Hindus".<sup>8</sup> He wrote, "The fact that Hindus are a majority is of no significance. There is no need to fear Hindus. You must fear God."

Azad had also to dispel suspicion among the Muslims that he was asking them to give up their distinct identity. He wrote:

We consider Islam far too high for its followers to be obliged in any aspect of life to be followers (*taqlid karne wale*) of any other community. They give leadership to the whole world. They do not become followers of anyone.

He wanted, "In place of inactivity, movement; in place of slowness, alacrity, in place of despair, courage, in place of trust in the government, confidence in God and trust in the courage He has given us."

Azad, further, exhorted the Muslims to join the Hindus in the common fight against the British. In this regard he was influenced by Al-Afghani's teachings that in countries such as Egypt and India solidarity should prevail between Muslims and their non-Muslim compatriots in their struggle

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against the foreign domination<sup>9</sup> Abduh, too, had advocated the political unity of Muslims and non-Muslims, and, in reply to enquiries from India, supported inter-religious co-operation in welfare work. In *Al-Hilal*, Azad condemned the British policy of divide and rule, which created a cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was an irony of fate, Azad argued, that the Hindus and the Muslims, rather than uniting against the foreign rule, should fight each other. His purpose in *Al-Hilal* was to unite the Muslims against the foreign rule. He stated that this was not his individual opinion but the message of Islam, which repudiates any type of slavery — political or spiritual. In *Al-Hilal*, Azad emerges as a non-co-operator with the Government and a fore-runner of Mahatma Gandhi, who was to launch his anti-British agitation in 1919.

Another problem that he faced was how to lead his people along the right path, so that they could live a life of dignity, free from ignorance, superstition and poverty. He realized the pressing need for the reform of Muslim society and this, he felt, was possible only through education. Human mind, he stated, was a *tabula rasa* on which fingers of instruction could move and generate forces strong enough to reconstruct a new order of society. But the question was what type of education was needed in the best interests of Muslim society? In this regard his conviction was firm; education based on Islam. He considered Western education purely as a means to employment and a ploy to keep the Muslims away from the national political movement. Yet he strongly advocated the need for acquiring knowledge of modern sciences. In February, 1913, he started a column on “scientific matters” (*Muzakira-e-Ilmiya*). Articles on Radium, Scott’s expedition to the South Pole, and Dr. Maria Montessori’s new education philosophy, appeared in its pages. Eight years earlier, in the pages of *Al-Nadwa*, his appreciation of modern sciences was amply reflected.

In a short while *Al-Hilal* had achieved new heights of popularity, and its circulation exceeded 25,000. During those days it was difficult for any paper to criticize the Government, even the dominant Congress party was moderate. Luckily, the Government of Bengal did not understand the contents of the paper due to the use of Persianised Urdu. The warning came from *The Pioneer* of Lucknow, which referred to the fierce propaganda that *Al-Hilal* was carrying on. The Bengal Government forfeited its security deposit of Rs.2,000, and objected to the articles “Military News” and “Fall of Antwerp”, published in the issue of 14-21 October, 1914. The ‘Fall of Antwerp’ featured a photograph of sleeping Belgian troops. A Quranic verse was cited below: “God was not tyrannical to them but they were tyrannical to themselves”. The Government demanded a second deposit of Rs.10,000. Azad was forced to close down the press. The last issue was dated December 18, 1914.

After five months, Azad started another press with *Al-Balagh* as the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 83

new weekly, from November 12, 1915. This continued until March 17-31, 1916. The Government resorted to *The Defence of India Regulations*, and, in 1916, externed Azad from Calcutta to Ranchi where he was interned till December, 1919.

*Al-Balagh* was no different in spirit from *Al-Hilal*, though there was a greater emphasis in it on the ethical philosophy of Islam. The object of *Al-Balagh* was to publish two types of articles, one set for the learned and another set for the general public. Some of the special articles related to "Islam and Socialism", "Impact of War on Morality", "Greek Influence on Islam", etc. The underlying message of all these was Islam and its meaning. *Al-Balagh* exhorted the Muslims to stand up and to fight against injustice.<sup>10</sup>

*Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* had a profound influence on that generation of Muslims. They threw the Muslims community into a vortex of political activity. Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deoband acknowledged the debt the Muslims owed to Azad; "We had forgotten the true path to which *Al-Hilal* brought us back". Mohammad Ali confessed that he learnt to be a leader from Azad's prose and Iqbal's poetry. Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani said that it left a deep imprint on his mind. Dr. Zakir Husain observed that *Al-Hilal* kindled a spark in his heart which sustained him throughout his life and inspired all his endeavours.<sup>11</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his *Discovery of India*.

Abul Kalam Azad spoke in a new language to them (Muslims) in his weekly *Al-Hilal*. It was not only a new language in thought and approach, even its texture was different, for Azad's style was terse and virile though sometimes a little difficult because of its Persian background. He was a strange mixture of medieval scholasticism, eighteenth century rationalism and modern outlook. Abul Kalam Azad attacked the stronghold of conservatism and anti-nationalism, not directly, but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Muslim intellectual circles and though the elders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation.<sup>12</sup>

Later in his Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress at its Annual Session at Ramgarh in March, 1940, Azad observed:

I launched *Al-Hilal* in 1912 and placed my conclusion before

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<sup>10</sup> This analysis is based on the study of the files of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*

<sup>11</sup> Arsh Malsiani *Abul Kalam Azad*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, December, 1976

<sup>12</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru *Discovery of India*, 3rd edition, pp 325-26



the Muslims of India. I need not remind you that my advice was heard and heeded. The period from 1912 to 1916 marked a new phase in the political awakening of the Muslims.

Azad made two other efforts to embark on journalistic ventures; one in September, 1921 when he launched the weekly *Paigham*, and the other in June, 1927 when he revived *Al-Hilal*. The drawback in both these ventures was that Azad had little time to spare for journalism. He was far too involved in politics. He left the management of these papers to his friend Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi. *Paigham* propagated the ideas of Non-cooperation and Khilafat. Although this paper expounded Islam's basic principles, its emphasis was on current politics.

*Al-Hilal* was also edited by Malihabadi, although Azad wrote some excellent articles such as "Islam and Nationalism" which raised the crucial question of what constitutes nationality. It also published elaborate data on the British exploitation of India. It had articles on Napoleon, Byron, Victor Hugo etc. It, however, closed down on December 9, 1927.

During the period he also launched a fortnightly *Al-Jamia* in Arabic on April 1, 1923. It lasted until March, 1924. This was the first Indian journal in Arabic. Its main purpose was to keep the Arab world informed of the political activities in India. Its basic theme was similar to that of *Paigham*, *Al-Hilal*'s message of Pan-Islamism and the unity of the East was echoed in *Al-Jamia*.

*Al-Hilal* appeared at a time when Urdu press was emerging as a bold and outspoken critic of the policies of the Government. Zafar Ali Khan's *Zamindar* (1909), Mohammad Majid Hasan's *Medina* (1912), Mohammad Ali's *Hamdard* (1912), Syed Wahiddudin Salim's *Muslim Gazette* (1913), were some other renowned contemporary papers. What distinguished *Al-Hilal* was its solid scholarly content and its unique style. Azad's style of Urdu prose is characterised by the wealth of Arabic and Persian constructions, unusual sensitivity to language, moving eloquence, power of oratory, verve and virility. This is not only unparalleled in Urdu journalism but also in Urdu literature. His prose was interspersed with quotations from Arabic, Persian and Urdu poetry. It was laced with verses from the Quran. His was the grand style and he spoke in the language of "a high-souled prophet". His style was imbued with his political maturity and vision, his scholastic attainment, his almost encyclopaedic knowledge, and his cultivated taste for literature. Sajjad Ansari says, "If the Quran had not been revealed in Arabic, then it would have appeared in the form of Azad's prose and Iqbal's poetry." Dr Khwaja Ahmed Farooqi writes, "It goes to Azad's credit that he had demolished the barriers between journalism and creative literature."<sup>13</sup> In fact, Azad elevated journalism to the level of literature. In the field of Urdu journalism his

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<sup>13</sup> Arsh Malsiani, p. 20



contribution is not only outstanding but also immortal. What Dryden said of Shakespeare with respect to drama is true of Azad relative to his journalism.

But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be,  
Within that circle none durst walk but he!

It is a pity that Azad's influence on Urdu journalism was limited, if not marginal. No one followed the trail that he had blazed; the reason being that it was difficult to attain his high standard of excellence, his intellectual level, and copy his style which was truly inimitable. Moreover, after political activities grew in intensity and range, there was qualitative change in the style of journalism. The focus was shifted from views to news, from literature to politics, from a broad range of subjects to the narrow domain of day-to-day events. Indian journalism, in fact, became more extrovert and less introvert, as in the earlier phase Azad, therefore, stands out as a lonely colossus in the field of Urdu journalism.

It would be evident from our survey that Azad's commitment to journalism was absolute. Before 1912, it was a period of experimentation in journalism. But during the *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* period (1912-1916), he brought journalism to the peak of glory. For him it was the finest period of achievement. It was perhaps the only period in his life when Azad felt satisfied with his performance. After these papers were forced to discontinue, Azad tried again to restore his journalistic activity to its former level. But this was not possible because of his deep involvement in politics. Human energy being limited, politics took most of his time. The law of compensation works inexorably in human affairs. What the nation lost in terms of the discontinuation of Azad's work as a journalist, was more than made up through his valuable contribution as a leading figure in the field of politics during the entire period of the Independence movement after 1920.

# A Revolutionary Nationalist

*Mushirul Haq*

As early as 1905, unnoticed even by his strict disciplinarian *Sufi-Alim* father, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) who had then hardly stepped into manhood, started feeling dissatisfied with the religious as well as political life of the Indian Muslims. At that time, the Muslims were dependant on the ulema for guidance in religious matters, and for political leadership, on the Aligarh school Azad disliked both. Commenting on them he said

It drives me mad to see the deplorable sight that today, among the Muslims, there are only two types of leaders. For the traditionalists there are the ulema, for the modernists the Western-educated intellectuals. Both are ignorant of religion and both are paralyzed limbs of the community. They have no idea of their destination.

The one is unable to get a boat,  
The other can't find the shore

The first group is beset by religious superstitions, prejudices, and stagnancy, while the other is caught up in atheism, imitation of the West, and love of power and position.<sup>1</sup>

His extra-textual reading of history and philosophy as well as his knowledge, through Arabic newspapers, of the political activities of the nationalist groups of the Muslim world convinced him that no political struggle would be successful in India unless it was launched jointly by the Hindus and the Muslims. By nature, Azad was an activist, and, therefore, appreciated the terrorist activities of the Bengali Hindu revolutionaries who were agitating against the partition of Bengal. The Hindu revolutionary groups regarded Muslims as camp-followers of the British (especially because of their support for the scheme of partition), and had consciously

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Hilal* 1(4) August 4, 1912, p 4

closed their doors on them. Azad, who had by then started working among Muslims, found that there were young men ready to take up the new political task. Therefore, with the help of some moderate revolutionaries he tried to convince the extremists that they would not succeed in their mission without gaining the confidence of the Muslims and letting them work with them. It was not an easy task for Azad; but he succeeded to the extent that he himself gained entry to one of the groups. Meanwhile, he had to go on an extensive tour of Muslim countries where he met, in Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, the young Muslim revolutionaries. This further convinced him of the efficacy of the revolutionary activism, and also the necessity of working jointly with the Hindus for ousting the British. After his return from the tour in 1908, he planned to publish an Urdu journal for transmitting his message to the Muslims. With this in mind Azad launched, in 1912, his Urdu weekly *Al-Hilal* from Calcutta. It was considered, "A brilliant paper written in a new, moving style, amazingly forceful. It was illustrated, and was printed from type. Its influence was prodigious, especially among the great. Azad was politically and religiously radical. The paper shocked the conservatives and created a furore, but there were many Muslims ready to follow him."<sup>2</sup>

In 1913, when his one year old journal, *Al-Hilal*, had gained popularity among the Muslims, he tried to utilize the experience which he had gained a few years ago in the field of revolutionary activism. From the first day of his public appearance he had been asking the Muslims to work with the Hindus for the liberation of the country. He had gone as far as to say that for the Muslims the struggle for Independence was not only a religious obligation but a Jihad.<sup>3</sup> To wage Jihad soldiers were needed. Azad was not so naive as to think that the British Government would let him continue his revolutionary activities for the liberation of the country, if his intention was specifically stated. He, therefore, deliberately presented his scheme to the readers in such a way that it appeared no more than an attempt for making them good Muslims. Without disclosing the real aims and objectives he announced, in April 1913, his intention of founding an organization. The note which he published was entitled *Man Ansari Ilallah?* "Who are my helpers on the way to God?" In it he asked those who were in favour of the policy of *Al-Hilal* to send their names and addresses to be registered as members of the proposed party which he called *Hizbullah*, 'The Party of God'. The name *Hizbullah*, as he explained later, was derived from the Quran (58:22).<sup>4</sup> He promised to announce the programme of the party after he had received considerable

<sup>2</sup> W C Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, Reprint, Lahore, 1963, p 218

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Hilal* 1(23), December 18, 1912, p 11

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 3(3) September 2, 1913, p 233ff. Referring to the true believers, the verse, 58:22, concludes "God will be well pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the Party of God. Truly it is the Party of God that will achieve felicity."

number of applications from people willing to join the party <sup>5</sup> Next week he published a facsimile of the membership form with a note saying that after about two weeks he would proceed towards the "Second Stage" of the organization. Probably, what he meant was the announcement of the aims and objectives of the party

The membership form was as follows.<sup>6</sup>

*NAHNU ANSARULLAH*  
(We are the helpers of God)

(Quranic Verse 6.163, 164 in Arabic with Urdu translation)<sup>7</sup>

Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds; no associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit

Name:... ..Occupation. ....Age. ... ..  
Address ... ..

In the same issue he announced that within a week about eight hundred volunteers had sent him their names and addresses. This response he considered rather poor. For about a month Azad remained silent. In May, however, he announced that the membership forms were to be sent on request along with a pamphlet named *Risalah Davat-o-Tabligh*, 'The Invitation and the Preaching'.<sup>8</sup>

In the issue of June 4 he wrote the following note,

Those who have fearlessly sent their names as volunteers after hearing the call have, in fact, stood the first test of sacrifice and service. There was, as a matter of fact, a hidden purpose in not disclosing the aims and objectives of the party. The purpose was to distinguish between those who were really thirsty and those who were posing as thirsty people. The really thirsty people always run to wherever they are told of the possibility of finding water, regardless of the consequences which may follow. When the aims and objectives will be known, everybody will join. But their reward will never be as high as of those who participated at the most difficult time.<sup>9</sup>

In the same issue it was also announced that a tract describing the aims

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid 2(16) April 23, 1913, p 257

<sup>6</sup> Published separately with *Al-Hilal*, 2(17) April 30, 1913

<sup>7</sup> The number of the verse given on the form is 2:126 which, obviously, is a printing error

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Hilal* 2(20) May 21, 1913, p.335 Unfortunately the *Risalah* is not available.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 2(22) June 4, 1913, p 374.

and objectives of the party would soon be despatched to the members. There is no evidence available to indicate whether, in fact, the tract was ever printed and despatched. From time to time, however, notes were published in *Al-Hilal* about *Hizbullah*, showing the importance and significance of the party. But it was never explained how exactly the party would function.<sup>10</sup> After a few months Azad again wrote a long article about *Hizbullah*. The article stated that the members were supposed to imbibe the qualities of a *momin* (believer), given in the Quran (9:112). They read as follows, the way Azad serialised them:

1. Those who repent before God *Ta'ibun*
2. Those who serve Him *Aabidun*
3. Those who praise Him *Hamidun*
4. Those who forsake home and country and travel in the way of God *Sa'ihun*
5. Those who bow down *Raki'un*
6. Those who prostrate before Him *Sajidun*
7. Those who enjoin the right and forbid the wrong *Aamirun bil-ma'ruf, Nahun anil-munkar*
8. Those who observe the limit set by God *Hafizun lihududillah*

According to Azad, since these were the stages which a *momin* had to traverse, a member of the *Hizbullah* was also expected to start from the first stage to reach the last stage. It was essential for every initiate to reach the eighth stage, and the duty of those who reached it was to establish such a system of government which could take care of the people according to the will of God. Borrowing a scheme of division from the Quran (35:32), Azad further divided the members reaching the eighth stage, into three orders.

Initially the members will be admitted to the first order. Depending upon their qualities, some of them will later be promoted to the second order. Those elevated to the third order will be the controlling group of the working of the *Hizbullah*. At present that is all that can be disclosed. The method and the function of the controlling group is a secret, and no member belonging to the lower orders is allowed to attempt to know the secret of the higher order.<sup>11</sup>

How many were enlisted as the members of the *Hizbullah*, we do not know. This much, however, can be said that the readers of *Al-Hilal* were interested in knowing the details of the programme, so much so that

<sup>10</sup> For example, *Al-Hilal* 2(24) June 20, 1913 p 5, *Al-Hilal* 3(1) July 2, 1914, pp 4-8

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 3(23) December 3, 1913, pp 417-420

female readers also enquired how the purdah observing women could carry on the programme of the party. To one such inquirer Azad replied that in various issues of *Al-Hilal* he had made it clear that everyone was a preacher in his or her own way. Thus, a woman remaining in her home could very well perform the duties of the *Hizbullah*, as it was not essential for everyone to be on the move.<sup>12</sup> The woman must have felt disappointed because, as we have seen earlier, travelling was an essential condition for a member of the *Hizbullah*, without which he could not qualify for full membership.

In order to train workers, Azad had to establish a centre. He, therefore, invited people to help him in founding an institution which he called *Darul-Irshad* (The House of Guidance). Some came forward, and one of his well-wishers, Haji Muslihuddin, donated a plot of land in one of the suburbs of Calcutta and a handsome amount of money to build a dormitory and class rooms.<sup>13</sup> Ostensibly, the institution was established to teach the meaning of the Quran but was actually meant to promote his plan for revolution. *Darul-Irshad* was not open to all and sundry. Only a few select graduates either from a university or an Islamic seminary were given admission. The selection was made on all-India basis. No text-book was prescribed. Teaching was conducted mainly through lectures. The period of training and teaching was from six months to one year. The reason for such a short-term training programme, was, "We do not have enough time to walk. We have to run."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately we do not have any authentic record of Azad's lectures to the trainees. But as the government of the time was closely watching every step of Azad, references to *Hizbullah* and *Darul-Irshad* are found in the file of the Intelligence Branch of the Bengal Police. According to a police informer, Azad had delivered in February 1916, a lecture on the topic of jihad at a closed meeting in *Darul-Irshad*. He said,

For a jihad it is not always obligatory that there should be a battlefield, a sword or military organization. But on every *mo-min*, it is obligatory to inflict injury by any means which may cause to the enemy loss in life, property, land, nationality, commerce or in morals.

The ways and means of the anarchist in seeking the right which nowadays injures the pride of government with bombs and bullets of revolvers, are from a non-Muslim Party, but certainly the work is Islamic (in nature) although the doer is not a Muslim ... From this whole speech you must have understood that

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 2(21) May 28, 1913, p 367

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 5(5) July 20, 1914, pp 5-8

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Balagh* 1(1) November 12, 1915, pp 16-17

anarchical outrage and Germanite victorious attack are a kind of jihad and it is obligatory on every such *momin* who has faith in Quran to adopt ways and means which he can contemplate to kill and destroy Christianity and its sons, and to clear the surface of the earth of their unholy existence.<sup>15</sup>

We know that secrecy always helps those who like to exaggerate. It is, therefore, hard to say whether the Intelligence Branch received the accurate and honest report of the lecture. This much, however, can be said with some degree of certainty that the government did not take the lecture lightly. On 14 July, 1914 the *Darul-Irshad* was founded, and the academic session commenced in October. The next month the Government of Bengal confiscated Azad's journal *Al-Hilal* and its Press. In November 1915, Azad started a new journal entitled *Al-Balagh* which also met the same fate. The publication of the paper was banned by the Bengal Government and Azad was served orders on March 28, 1916, to leave the Province within seven days.

As the Governments of Punjab, Delhi, U P, and Bombay had already banned his entry into these Provinces, Azad went to Ranchi (Bihar), where after six months he was interned till the last day of 1919. And that served a death-blow to the *Hizbullah* as well as the *Darul-Irshad*.

The official records of the Intelligence Branch of the Bengal Police suggest that after his return from Ranchi, Azad vigorously started reactivating his revolutionary plan. He gradually made his secret society broad-based and inter-communal. As he had earlier advocated to the Hindu revolutionary parties that Muslims also be allowed to join with them, after establishing his position as a revolutionary leader, he opened the door of his party to the Hindus. Two Hindu revolutionary leaders of the *Jugantar* party, Santosh Mitra and Bipin Ganguly, are reported to have joined his Party.<sup>16</sup> During this period he also appears have used terrorist methods for achieving the desired end. One of his close associates, Qutbuddin Ahmad, who had worked with him as the manager of *Al-Hilal*, was reported to have founded in 1921, *Anjuman-i-Khansaman*, a Union of Cooks and Butlers working in English households. He had once persuaded them to call a strike which somehow did not materialise. Later, with their connivance he had hatched up a more deadly plan of assassinating the English by smuggling revolutionaries in European clubs and hotels. The police

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<sup>15</sup> Intelligence Branch, Calcutta, 1916, "Objectionable lectures made in *Darul Irshad*", as found in Rajat Ray, "Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists and Bolsheviks: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld in Calcutta, 1905-1925", p 110, in Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India*, Delhi, 2nd ed. 1985, pp 101-124. References to 1B are on the authority of Rajat Ray's above work.

<sup>16</sup> 1B 1921, "Mohammadan Secret Organization, Calcutta."



suspected that Azad was behind the plan, but could not prove it.<sup>17</sup>

This phase of Maulana Azad's life is shrouded in mystery. We do not have any other independent evidence to connect Azad with what the police was reporting about him. Assuming that he was conspiring with revolutionary terrorists, he does not seem to have remained there for long either. He soon diverted his energies to organizing the Muslims for the liberation of the country

Knowing the Muslim mind he devised a scheme of attracting them by a prolific use of religious idiom and phraseology. He soon started sending his emissaries to U.P., Punjab, and other places for inviting Muslims to recognize him as their spiritual mentor (Shaikh, Peer) by offering their allegiance (*bay'ah*) to him. We know of his two such disciples, one from U.P., Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi and the other from Punjab, Ghulam Rasul Mehr

Malihabadi (d. India, 24 June, 1959) had become his *murid* (spiritual disciple) in 1919 and was designated his *Khalifah* (lieutenant). Malihabadi was expected to initiate people in the circle on Azad's behalf. The written authority that Azad is supposed to have given to Malihabadi is as follows

My brother in religion Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi has offered his allegiance (*bay'ah*) to me. I hereby declare that he is authorised to accept on my behalf the pledges of other people to my *bay'ah*. Whosoever extends his hand to him will become my disciple.

*Abul Kalam, dated 4th of Shaban 1338 A.H. (1919)*<sup>18</sup>

Ghulam Rasul Mehr (d. Pakistan, 16 November, 1971), the other disciple who had pledged himself to Azad in 1923, has produced Azad's letter of 1921, addressed to his followers in Punjab. The letter reads as follows

All those who have offered me this year or last year or even earlier their *bay'ah* are reminded through this letter that they had promised to observe the following five conditions

1. To enjoin good and forbid evil
2. To love and hate people only for the sake of God
3. Not to be afraid of any power other than God's
4. To leave every relationship, comfort, and pleasure if it becomes a hindrance in the way of God and the shariah.
5. To follow every command (of the shariah) which is conveyed to them

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 1B 1921, 1922, Lists of Labour Unions and Associations in Bengal (Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, a life long associate of Maulana Azad, in his memoirs, *Zikr-e-Azad*, (Calcutta, 1960, pp 398-401, and also 411) has branded Qutbuddin Ahmad as a 'Communist' without mentioning any of his supposedly terroristic activities

<sup>18</sup> Malihabadi, Abdul Razzaq, *Zikr-e-Azad*, Calcutta, 1960, p 25

The above conditions cannot be regarded extraordinary because they are in line with the stipulation made by any other Sufi mentor. The significance lies in the conclusion to which Azad draws the attention of his disciples when he says

I would like to remind my disciples about what they had pledged. It is now time that they must show through their acts that they were sincere in their vow. This pledge now obliges them to observe strictly the following four orders:

- 1 They should immediately stop buying, selling, using and giving as gift, foreign goods and wear only swadeshi clothes.
2. They must remember that the honour of the Khilafat and the Islamic countries depends on the Independence of India. Therefore they must help with their hearts, tongues, money, and deeds to achieve (the Independence of India)
- 3 They must try to be friendly with every Muslim and avoid everything which might create division among them.
- 4 They must not forget that the Islamic shariah enjoins us to work unitedly with the Hindus. It is, therefore, the duty of my disciples to keep friendly relations with them, and avoid such things which may harm the unity.

Those who want to keep their *bay'ah* to me alive are under obligation to follow the above-mentioned orders. Those who disregard them will have no relationship with me.

-Abul Kalam Azad<sup>19</sup>

This letter clearly indicates that Azad's main purpose of launching the movement along Sufi lines was to organize the Muslims for the Independence of India.

There is another evidence available in the writings of Azad to support the thesis that he wanted to organize the Muslims, in the name of religion, for fighting the British.

One of Azad's followers from Punjab, Mohiuddin Ahmad Qusuri, wrote to Azad around 1925, criticising his political affiliation with the Congress and (probably) accusing him of not following the *jama'ah* (party of Muslims, that is, perhaps, the Muslim League). Qusuri quoted a *hadith* of the Prophet, which relates the consequences of schism. Azad replied to him that the meaning of the *hadith* about following the *jama'ah* had not correctly been understood. The *jama'ah*, Azad said, does not always mean the 'majority'. We know that there are hardly one or two people out of a hundred who can be regarded as 'real' Muslims. In this case, Azad asked, who should be followed? The two 'real' Muslims or the rest of the community? Then Azad applied this logic to the political situation of

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<sup>19</sup> Ghulam Rasul Mehr (ed.) *Naqsh-i-Azad*, 2nd edition, 1950, pp 343-345

the time He said that a nation becomes politically backward if its majority tends to be subjugated In this situation if a man stands up and tries to revitalize his people, his way will certainly be contrary to the way of the majority Will he then be considered (according to the *hadith*) to have gone out of the fold of the *jama'ah*? Justifying his position in this way, Azad said that he might be accused of having gone out of the *jama'ah*, but, in fact, he had always been trying to organize the real *jama'ah* (that about which the Prophet had said, "Those who would go against the *jama'ah* would make their dwelling in the Fire") Even the ulema, Azad said, had not understood the real meaning of this *hadith* He said that in 1914, he invited many of the ulema to get together and do something for the liberation of the country But the response from many of them was that it had never been done before If they did anything against the established practice of the community they would be considered as having gone out of the *jama'ah* <sup>20</sup>

According to Azad, the absence of the *Imam* was the main reason for the backwardness of the Indian Muslims in political and religious life. To live without the *Imam* was, in his eyes, a sin for the whole community. By this he meant that Indian Muslims had forgotten to live under an order sanctioned by the shariah <sup>21</sup>

His argument was

The Quran and the *sunnah* of the Prophet have made it clear that the sin of the individual does not destroy a community at once. The individual's sin is like slow poison for the life of the community. But collective sin, i.e., the absence of a system for living as a community, is a fatal germ which multiplies overnight and destroys the whole community In fact personal righteousness also depends on the establishment of the right system of governance I must say that the Indian Muslims are committing a sin by not living under an order.

The Quran and the *sunnah* have given us three pillars to support the edifice of the community life

- 1 The whole community must agree on one person as their *Imam*.
2. Whatever he tells them must be obeyed.
3. Whatever he orders them on the basis of the Quran and the *sunnah*, must be observed.

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<sup>20</sup> Ghulam Rasul Mehr (ed) *Tabarrukat-e-Azad* (A collection of Azad's letters to various persons), Lahore, 1959, pp 42-49 (The text of Qusuri's letter is not given in the book The present writer, on the basis of Azad's reply to Qusuri, has reconstructed the main points which evidently were raised in Qusuri's letter)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid pp 42-49

Let all the tongues be mute except the Imam's. Let all the minds be numb except his. People should not have a tongue or mind, they should only have a heart to follow. If this is not done, then we are no better than a crowd.

According to the shariah, we need the Imam who has eyes to see deep into things, a mind to unravel intricate problems, and a heart full of the secret knowledge of the Quran and the *sunnah*. The Imam will apply the principles of the shariah to the present condition of the Indian Muslims, and also will apply them to the new situation after India becomes independent. Also he will apply those principles in the ever-changing circumstances of war and peace. He will have the right to issue *fatva* when he considers it necessary. Not every *alim* is qualified to perform this duty, not every *madrasa* teacher has an idea of the important function of the Imam.<sup>22</sup>

On the importance and need of the Imam, Azad confided in Malihabadi and told him

The Muslims of India would be organized in the name of religion. An Imam would be elected to whom obedience would be considered a religious obligation. The Muslims would accept the authority of the Imam if they were told that without him their life was sinful. When a considerable number of Muslims would surrender themselves to the authority of the Imam, he would enter into agreement with the Hindus and declare jihad against the British. In this way by the joint effort of the Muslims and the Hindus, the British would be defeated. But who should be the Imam? He has to be a person whose integrity cannot be questioned. He also has to be a person who has full knowledge of contemporary conditions.

Malihabadi adds:

It was evident that in the eyes of the Maulana no one was more suitable for the office of the Imam than him. I was also of the opinion that he fully deserved the position.<sup>23</sup>

It was not, however, an easy task for some one to become the Imam of the Indian Muslims unless the ulema agreed. Among the ulema of that time the most important was Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deoband. Although Azad does not say that he ever attempted to obtain from Maulana Mahmud Hasan his recognition for the office of the Imam, his biographer, Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, says that Azad had authorised him to contact Maulana

<sup>22</sup> Abul Kalam Azad, Presidential Address, Bengal Khilafat Conference, 1920, reproduced in *Khutubat-i-Azad*, 1959, pp 99-102

<sup>23</sup> Malihabadi, *Zikr-i-Azad*, p 24

Mahmud Hasan and another alim of Lucknow, Maulana Mohammad Abdul Bari, to obtain their approval for his *Imam* at Malihabadi says that when Maulana Mahmud Hasan visited Lucknow, after his return from Malta in 1919, Malihabadi waited on him in private and discussed the question of the *Imam* at First he requested Maulana Mahmud Hasan to become the *Imam* of the Indian Muslims. The Maulana refused to take the responsibility but agreed to the proposal that Maulana Azad should be appointed *Imam*, and gave Abdul Razzaq the permission to quote him in public <sup>24</sup>

The next step, says Malihabadi, was to convince Maulana Mohammad Abdul Bari. The reason for approaching him was that he was also known to have shown interest in politics, and, more important, the two 'Big Brothers' of the Indian Muslim-politics, Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali were his disciples. These two brothers were not on very good political terms with Azad. It was, therefore, by no means easy for Azad to get himself recognized as the *Imam* by Maulana Mohammad Abdul Bari. However, Malihabadi contacted him and obtained a written document from him supporting Azad, which reads as follows:

I have no alternative but to follow the opinion of the public (*jamhur*) on the question of the *Imamat* or the *Shaikhul-Islamiyat*. Although I have often feared the consequences of this move, I am still prepared to accept the proposal put by the Muslims. Many times, I myself was offered this office but because of my physical incapacity I never accepted the offer, nor have I any intention of accepting it in future. I asked Maulana Mahmud Hasan (to take up the office of the *Imam*), but he also seems to be too weak physically to carry the heavy responsibility. Maulana Abul Kalam seems to be willing to accept it. I have no objection to choosing him. I shall accept him (as the *Imam*) provided it does not create any schism among the Muslim community. Maulana (Azad) is fit for the office, but I am even prepared to follow an unfit person if he is accepted by all or by the majority of the Muslims. In that case they will find me the most obedient and faithful (to the *Imam*). The fact is that I do not myself like to initiate such a move, nor do I want to take the responsibility of nominating anyone, I can only follow the *jama'ah* of the Muslims. Apart from this I do not have any connection with this move.

-Mohammad Abdul Bari<sup>25</sup>

Azad found this document written in rather 'diplomatic language'. He, therefore, instructed Malihabadi to postpone, for the time being, the matter

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid p 36

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p 37

of gathering support <sup>26</sup>

Two of Azad's biographers say that he was elected *Imamul-Hind* (Leader of India) by the ulema in 1921

A B Rajput says in his book, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, "In a special conference of the ulema at Lahore, where a thousand Muslim divines had gathered, he was unanimously elected as the *Imamul-Hind* or the Spiritual Head of India, an honour which a young man of his age had never received in the country, and which he accepted only after great pressure from the Lucknow and Deoband ulema" <sup>27</sup> The other biographer, Abdullah Butt in his article, "Maulana Abul Kalam Azad", says that Azad was elected *Imamul-Hind* in 1921, at the Lahore session of the Jamiyatul-Ulema-e-Hind. <sup>28</sup>

It is a fact that Maulana Azad was commonly known among the Muslims of India as *Imamul-Hind*, but the record of the Jamiyat, (then the only religio-political body of the Indian Muslims headed by the ulema), shows that neither he nor anyone else was ever elected as the Imam of the Indian Muslims. A resolution was indeed passed at the Lahore session of the Jamiyat to elect the *Amirul-Hind* (meaning the same as *Imamul-Hind*), and a sub-committee was also appointed to consider all aspects of the issue and present its report at the next session of the Jamiyat <sup>29</sup> The sub-committee did submit its report at the next session but since there was no quorum, the report could not be discussed <sup>30</sup> This question was again raised in 1935, in the twelfth session of the Jamiyat, but was postponed <sup>31</sup> Apparently the two above-mentioned biographers are mistaken in their belief that Azad was elected Imam. The reason for their mistake seems to be the fact that Azad was the President of the Lahore session of the Jamiyat at which the resolution of the appointment of an Imam was passed. It is possible, therefore, that his election to the presidency of the session was misconstrued as that of his appointment to the office of the Imam at

What has so far been said shows that Maulana Azad from his very young age was a radical who believed in the efficacy of revolutionary tactics. At the beginning, he had established links with the political underworld of Calcutta. Later, he organized a secret society giving it religious colour in order to remove doubts from the minds of the Muslims. Finally, he came up with a novel idea of having himself appointed as the Imam of the Muslims with absolute power vested in that office.

Since the position of the Imam has always been given religious

<sup>26</sup> Ibid p 38

<sup>27</sup> A B Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Lahore, 1946, p 69

<sup>28</sup> Abdullah Butt (ed) *Abul Kalam Azad*, Lahore, 1943, p 216

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Miyan, "Jamiyatul -Ulema kya hai? Yani, "Jamiyatul Ulema-e-Hind" ki chhabbis salah tajawiz", Delhi, Vol II, p 45

<sup>30</sup> Ibid p 47

<sup>31</sup> Ibid p 215

importance by Muslims. Azad thought that the ulema would find the move acceptable. In this way he could have become the head of the Muslim community. But what Azad did not realize was that his scheme for *Imamat* was a threat to the established institution of the ulema. The ulema had always bowed their heads before a ruler so long as he promised to help them guard the shariah. But it was against their tradition to elect someone from among themselves as the absolute head of the Muslim community. Therefore, the motion to appoint the Imam of the Indian Muslims was postponed either for the lack of quorum or for further consideration whenever it was presented before the Working Committee of the Jamiatul-Ulema-e-Hind.

Although it is true that Azad failed in his scheme of becoming the Imam of the Indian Muslims, he was considered as one of the greatest leaders of the Muslims of India. In the years that followed, we find him sitting with the ulema with his usual dignity and addressing the Muslims on question of Islam and of Nationalism, but it seems as if his language had become unintelligible to them. The reason for this is not far to seek if we investigate whether or not Azad and other ulema were speaking the same language. In other words, we have to find out if the meaning of Indianness was the same in the dictionaries of Azad and of the other ulema.



# Secularism within Islamic Context

*Kazi Javed*

Maulana Azad, who should be ranked with the greatest Muslim scholars of the first half of the 20th century, was also a freedom fighter of outstanding stature and distinction. Memories of his brilliant contributions in the fields of religion and politics are still fresh in the hearts of his countless admirers. Its lustre and radiance has remained untarnished despite the passage of time. Although some of his political views and convictions still arouse controversy, there is no doubt, that in thought and action he was always prompted and guided by his vast erudition in Islamic teaching and by his expertise in the Quran's esoteric and exoteric lore.

Maulana Azad adhered to a universal view of Islam. For him it was a religion that essentially stood for a moral and spiritual vision of life. As soon as one entered its fold, one automatically broke away from all parochial bonds of colour, race and region. Maulana Azad struck a fine balance between the orthodox ulema and the modern romantics. In politics he was a staunch nationalist and a firm patriot, devoting his life to the parallel goals of India's freedom and Hindu-Muslim unity. During his own lifetime he was often criticised for many of his socio-political views, but he has never been accused of obscurantism or subversion of Islamic teachings. His scholarship covered a wide range of areas, but he subordinated all his immense learning to the authority of the Quran. And it was through the precepts of the holy book that he drew his final intellectual and moral convictions. He saw the future of humanity in the fulfilment of the great spiritual destiny envisaged by the Quran. He regarded the socio-political barriers of colour, race and parochial creeds as hindrances in the realization of this spiritual goal and sought to remove them.

Maulana Azad's book *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is a work that has performed a very important service in religious reforms and the advancement of the Indian Muslims. In this work he has laboured to elaborate the concept of the unity of all religions. In its essence the idea is borrowed from Shah Waliullah. According to Maulana Azad, the idea of the unity of all religions

is based on the concept that religions have two component parts, i.e., the *spirit* of religion and the *form* of religion. The *spirit* or essence is of central importance. According to the Quran, the religions of the world are the same in essence and there is no distinction among them. But the *form* of religion continues to vary in accordance with time and space, because any given external form represents the *zeitgeist*.

Fundamentally, all religions are knit in a thread of unity. All the eminent divines and great spiritual guides who have appeared in different epochs, invited people to the same path of spiritual ripeness of the soul. The same divine principle permeates all the four quarters of the supreme nature, and ultimate spiritual guidance for the humanity is one and the same. Thus the Holy Quran says, 'All the messengers of God, at whatever place or time they were born, they all were invited to the same path, they all were the heralders of the same law of righteousness.'

What is this universal law of righteousness? It is faith and right action, i.e. to believe in one God and to lead a life of good deeds. Whatever is said or done against this in the name of religion is not the true teaching of any religion. Thus, we can understand that founders of all religions preached only one religion, and they had warned against disagreement and schism.

They wanted to create accord and unity among the different groups of mankind. Hence, the essence and purpose of their teachings was oneness of God and unity of mankind. This concept of religion as propounded by Maulana Azad brings him in the intellectual fold of Nanak, Kabir, Mian Mir, and Dara Shikoh. This is the course that has been traversed earlier by the philosophers and mystics of the school of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*.

Maulana Azad was imbued with a spirit of radical patriotism. He firmly believed that the uplift and progress of the Indian Muslims depended on the political unity of India. He knew that India was a conglomeration of different creeds and dogmas, and, only by inculcating a spirit of tolerance, harmony and mutual trust between its various sections, could the true spirit of religion and humanism be developed and promulgated. The vast, colourful, and variegated historical culture of India was the result of such a unity in the past. As a Muslim he believed in reaching and spreading the nationalist message of Islam, and also that a united India would make an ideal ground for experimentation and realization of the universalist tenets of Islam and its principles of tolerance, love, justice and brotherhood. At the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century India was the centre of religious and philosophical activity. It was a time when many revivalist and reformist movements in different religions were in full swing. In Hinduism, Arya Samajis, Brahmo Samajis, and Dev Samajis were busy reviving the classical spirit of Hinduism and proving that Hinduism was still a vital and dynamic force, capable of meeting the requirements of the modern age. Behind these reform movements were such illustrious minds as Swami Dayanand, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Vivekananda.

Among Muslims, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had launched their revivalist movements. Christian missionaries, Sikhs, Buddhists and Theosophists were, likewise, very active. In short, it was a time when a mighty war of arguments and philosophical subtleties was going on. Advocates and apologists of different dogmas and creeds were doing their utmost to prove the merits and superiority of their respective faiths and convictions.

This was the social and intellectual background of India in which Maulana Azad grew into manhood and maturity. Azad has stated that it was not the experience of the Khilafat movement that convinced him of the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity, "It was much earlier that I had arrived at this conclusion." He believed that as citizens of the same country, Hindus and Muslims had no choice but to promote brotherhood and solidarity for the sake of the country's future. He tried to make both the religious communities understand that their fortunes were linked and interdependent because the British Government was their common enemy, and was so much more powerful than India, if divided, was bound to fall.

In 1921, at Agra, while addressing the provincial Khilafat Committee, Maulana declared that Hindu-Muslim unity was a religious obligation binding upon the Muslims. He said that the Muslims, together with the other inhabitants of India constituted the Indian nation. This was so not only according to the modern definition of a nation, but also according to the Islamic concept of a nation. While elaborating this point, Maulana cited an example from early Islamic history when Prophet Mohammad migrated to Medina and signed an agreement of peace and friendship with those Arab tribes that were settled around Medina. He used the phrase, *Ummat-i-Wahida* (one nation) meaning that the Muslim people of Medina along with their allied tribes constituted a single nation. Thus the term *Ummat* was given this dynamic interpretation, and on this interpretation Maulana Azad based and developed his theory of Nationalism. According to him all the inhabitants of India, collectively, made up an *Ummat-i-Wahida*, i.e. one nation. He said

In my appeal I have made it explicitly clear that the Indian Muslims will be discharging their highest duty, if they wholeheartedly unite with the Hindus. This amounts to the same as when the Prophet of God caused this to be written, 'We should all become as one nation against the Quraish'. The objectives, for the realization of which the Prophet commanded this, are more urgent and vital today. Today the great colonial powers of the West in the pride of their power and arrogance want to trample into dust the freedom of the Eastern nations. Is it not the duty of Muslims to unite with twenty-two crore Hindus and become one?

On the question of Hindu-Muslim unity and Indians being a single nation, Azad was not alone. Other freedom loving ulema of India had interpreted *Ummat* and nation in these very terms. Among them was Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, who had declared all Indians as one nation for they belonged to the same soil.

Maulana Azad considered secularism to be the most proper and just approach to unravelling the imbroglio of Indian political and social scenario. This conviction was based on a concrete and objective analysis of the whole situation. He fully realized that India, in spite of its uniform historical and political traditions, was a pantheon of different dogmas, creeds, racial and cultural groups and that the religious passion was a dominant factor in India's socio-cultural temperament. What was needed in this country, therefore, was an officially recognised legitimate principle that could guarantee the safety and assure the promotion of the spirit of its various faiths. That principle could only be secularism, for secularism is the most adequate and scientific way of development and promulgation of the highest ideals of humanism as well as the deepest and most cherished convictions of mankind. Maulana Azad was conscious of the Quranic injunction that enjoined the Muslims, "Co-operate with others in matters of righteousness and good deeds but do not co-operate in matters of sin and misdeeds."

Maulana's vast insight into Islamic history and literature had convinced him that it was a completely wrong notion that secularism was opposed to Islam. Secularism, in reality, is an unbiased and scientific way of approaching and tackling the socio-political issues. In its essence it is the political way of implementing the ideals of humanism and safeguarding the right of freedom of thought and expression.

The popular notion of a dichotomy between secularism and religion is a Western Christian concept. Even in Christianity it is a medieval concept. When the medieval church gradually sank under the influence of various monastic orders, a secular clergy survived within the Church. Islam does not believe in the division of the temporal and the religious. According to the teachings of Islam, man's physical, moral and spiritual conditions are interlinked with one another, and arrayed in a hierarchical order. Through the proper development and discipline of these conditions are created the appropriate physical, moral, and spiritual attributes necessary for the completion and fulfilment of human life.

In Maulana Azad's view secularism was not an end in itself. It was rather the means for obtaining some particular socio-political end, and the greatest of these ends was to pave the way for a smooth development and progress of the society and for peaceful social change; to recognise the ultimate importance of human rights, and to protect the oppressed, the starving, and the persecuted. Maulana Azad claimed that these were the ideals Islam proclaimed and sought to implement. In his writings and

speeches he challenged those who denied this view of Islam

In fact this was the same broad and liberal view of religion that had been proclaimed by some of the greatest figures of Indian history. It was the message that Lord Krishna, Ashoka, Vikramaditya, Nanak, and Akbar gave to the Indian people. They all wanted to present a unified view of religion and human welfare, and to unite a divided world

# The Educationist

*Prem Kirpal*

The coming of Independence was an occasion of great joy and exhilaration for all of us who had thought, hoped, acted, and dreamt about it throughout our youth. I had the added privilege of working for one of the chief architects of freedom, the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who became the first Education Minister of free India.

Maulana Sahib, as we called him with respect and affection, was already a legendary person - a nationalist leader of unblemished record, a scholar, a philosopher, and a man of great culture, charm and dignity. His achievements were vast and varied. I shall refer briefly to one aspect of his work, his great contribution to education for a free and resurgent India.

I remember vividly his first meeting with the officers of the Ministry of Education. In a room in the North Block of the Secretariat, where Lord Mountbatten had worked as Chief of the Eastern Command, during the Second World War, we waited eagerly for the Maulana's arrival. He came with his usual dignity and punctuality and addressed us with a few words which took deep root in my memory. He spoke in chaste Urdu with great simplicity and emotion.

Friends, a new era opens in India's history, an opportunity to make even greater efforts than those expended during our glorious struggle for freedom. We can rejoice that we are now free, and are masters of our destiny, even though we had to accept with great sadness the partition of the country. The quest for freedom is eternal. We have to preserve this precious gift with great vigilance and develop its concept and scope in our individual lives and in the life of our nation. The struggle has not finished. A great task lies ahead. Let us work hard with unity and faith and offer our best to the development of our nation. Let freedom grow and triumph in our thoughts and actions so that we may prove worthy of the ideals of our struggle for freedom.

✓ Education, science and culture have a unique role to play in making the new India of our dreams, with its rich composite culture, its precious unity in the midst of valuable diversities, its overall national integrity, its abiding values of truth, justice and tolerance, and its unique capacity to synthesize the cultures of the East and the West into a new and creative blend that preserves the best of the past, along with the eager pursuit of new paths of progress to enrich the quality of our lives. Let us all work together to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance, sloth and poverty, so that our country can take its rightful place in the comity of nations. The road to freedom is long and unending, this moment of Independence marks an important stage of achievement, it should now lead to even greater victories to enlarge the meaning and scope of freedom for all our people. Let us continue to strive for the attainment of such a freedom ✓

These were the words of a true freedom fighter who lived his beliefs and acted as he preached. That early meeting in the Secretariat left upon me a deep impression of the Maulana's personality, he came with the dignity of an emperor, but he spoke in a spirit of comradeship and equality. His natural shyness and preference for solitude sometimes made him appear distant and isolated, but in his thoughts, feelings and actions, he was extremely sensitive to the needs of his fellow beings, and could inspire them to nobler pursuits.

In 1947, when Maulana Azad took over the Ministry of Education, which included Science and Culture, he was to preside over the Ministry for an eventful decade. He was already known as a top leader of the freedom movement, having played important roles in a long and protracted battle against foreign rule. Few, however, understood the richness and many-sidedness of a complex personality, evolved during a lifetime of thought and action, of intense experience and perpetual striving. He had his roots in the great tradition of the civilization and culture of Islam and its interaction with the rich diversity of Indian thought and experience. In the growth of his personality, two streams of experience mingled to form an ocean of knowledge and wisdom. The world of abundant knowledge, keen intelligence, relentless logic and reason, was matched by intensity of feeling, loftiness of vision, and the pursuit of poetry. Romantic flights of fantasy and imagination were always restrained by the power of reason. Nothing needed to be repressed in his long voyage in the quest of truth.

When he entered the North Block to play a major role in the functioning of the Central Government, Azad had a clean and luminous world view of the unity of mankind, sustained and illustrated by the diversity of cultures and the primacy of truth, always revealing and



uplifting, nurturing and discovering the meaning and essence of life

It goes to the credit of Jawaharlal Nehru to have invited a person of Maulana Azad's seniority to take over the Education portfolio. What did education mean to Maulana Azad? It meant nothing less than man's being and becoming, derived from both religion and humanism. His own early education had been traditional, largely theological, and interrupted by the movements of his family from Hedjaz to India. As a child, he was blessed with innate intelligence, unquenchable curiosity, and the urge to learn and to explore. He made his world of thought and human relationship a school in which he could choose his teachers and let the spirit roam in earnestness, even ecstasy, to gather knowledge, and to learn how to learn. The best of all schools of learning was life itself. He brought to each moment of living a thirst for knowledge, and, over longer periods, sought and gathered wisdom, indeed became a *rishi*, a seer.

What were the objectives which guided Azad's stewardship of Indian education during the first formative period of the post-colonial era? In the occasional meetings of the senior staff in the Ministry of Education, we listened to the Maulana's views on educational policy and sometimes I had the opportunity of discussion with him on specific points concerning projects and priorities. From these highly refreshing encounters and his eloquent speeches and writings on education and culture, I gather that Maulana Azad geared his policies and actions to five main objectives of education.

### **1. Making of Man: Character-building: Moral and Cultural Values**

Education must contribute to the individual realizing his immense potential. Maulana Azad's thought and endeavour were directed to this end. To groups of teachers and students he stressed this aspect of education repeatedly. The role of the teacher, the influence of home and religion, the content and programmes of education at all levels, should aim at the building of character and the choice and practice of moral and cultural values. A sense of judgement to sift the right from the wrong must be developed through co-operation between the home and the school, guided by teachers and mentors.

Addressing the staff, students and parents of a prestigious public school, Maulana Azad, on one occasion, stressed the importance of seven important values which contributed to the making of man and his society in pursuit of excellence. In his words, the quest of *truth* is the principal aim of education, but one should not impose one's truth upon others through violence and dogmatism. From openness to different points of view, and through tolerance of beliefs other than one's own, one can learn the right pursuit of truth and its essence in different contexts and situations. The concept of *justice* is another important aim of education, related to the appreciation of rights and performance of duties.

necessary to the discipline of the individual and the good of his society. The right type of education, supported by the forms and traditions of culture, should lead to the spread of *enlightenment* for true civilization and equality of life. Students must learn *co-operation and unity* through togetherness and friendship, thus laying the foundation of peace and harmony. To this end, educational programmes should offer scope and guidance for the practice of human relations, often neglected in the obsession of the school with abstract knowledge, to the neglect of operational values and practical skills. The practice of *courtesy and chivalry* is a grace of life and enriches its quality. The spirit of *daring* is the most valued asset of youth to be learnt through education and its application to life. Society should give scope and encouragement to the flowering of the spirit of pioneering and creativity. Lastly, there is the quality of *humility* which chastens and sustains the spirit of man and the strivings of his mind. Maulana Azad dwelt upon these seven values in his eloquent style which always made a deep impression on his audience.

## **2. Education for Democracy: Mass Education: “Educating our Masters”**

Maulana Azad realized that the introduction of adult franchise called for a national programme of mass education which should stress the rights and duties of citizenship and the capacity to participate in the massive task of national development. Freedom had opened new vistas and revealed new opportunities, but the defences of newly-won freedom had to be built in the minds of free men. The citizens of free and Independent India had to be different from the colonial subjects of a foreign empire, and only a crash programme of mass education could effect such a mutation. One of his first measures as Minister of Education was the setting up of a section of Social Education in the Ministry.

Azad gave his attention to all aspects of national education, but his highest priority was social education. Linking social education with adult education, he stressed three aspects: imparting *literacy*, inculcating a lively sense of rights and duties of *citizenship*, and creating an *educated mind* in the masses which are deprived of literary education.

For developing a sense of citizenship and producing an educated mind, he advocated the development of five main programmes: (1) Every citizen must know the meaning of citizenship and how democracy functions. (2) Social education must train people in clean and healthy living and personal health. (3) Social education also means the imparting of such information to the people as will enable them to effect some improvement in their economic status. Arrangements should be made for training in a craft, for introducing better techniques in existing crafts, and for improving the general efficiency of the workers. (4) Social education must stress the proper training and refinement of the emotions. Art and literature

should be the instruments of this training. Folk music, drama, dance, poetry, and recreational activities must be included in a scheme of social education. (5) Social education should also contain an element of instruction in a universal ethic, with special emphasis on the necessity of democratic toleration of differences. Maulana Azad proposed these ideas at a press conference on 31 May, 1948, and announced that a comprehensive programme of education along these lines would be undertaken in the entire country, beginning with a pilot project to be launched immediately in the territory of Delhi.

I recall an interesting meeting in New Delhi in March 1951, at the time of the first official visit of the Director-General of UNESCO, Jaime Torres Bodet. He was a former Minister of Education of Mexico, who had become famous through his innovative work in rural education. He developed his experience of Mexico into a world-wide programme of fundamental education which he put at the heart of UNESCO's work. Through official interpreters and friendly colleagues, Maulana Azad and Torres Bodet had a lively discussion on mass education for developing countries. I was fascinated by this encounter of minds and spirits, so complex and diverse, yet in tune with each other, in the keen quest and ardent service of humanity.

After a long, animated conversation, Maulana Azad confided to Humayun Kabir that he preferred the concept of 'fundamental education' to the term 'social education' because education was more fundamental than merely social for the making of man and society. Soon a National Fundamental Education Centre was set up in collaboration with UNESCO to study ideas about mass education in the developing world.

### **3. Education for Development: Contribution to Economic Growth: Science and Technology**

Maulana Azad enhanced the role of education in national development and encouraged the growth of science and technology at all levels of education. In the course of an opening address at the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur in August 1951, he said:

One of the first decisions I took on assuming charge as Minister was that we must so improve the facilities for higher technical education in the country that we would ourselves meet most of our needs. The large number of our young men who have been going abroad for higher training could have received such training in the country itself. Indeed, I looked and still look forward to the day when the facilities of technical education in India will be of such a level that people from abroad will come to India for higher scientific and technical training.

To this end he geared the programmes and activities of the All India Council of Technical Education which set up new institutions, revised the content and curricula of technical education, and related it to employment and industry. India was launched on the road to the rearing of expertise for scientific and technical development.

#### **4. Education for National Integration: Composite Culture: Secularism**

To promote national unity on the basis of a rich diversity of cultures and beliefs was a cherished objective of education, to which Maulana Azad gave full support — both as Minister and as political leader. He stressed the importance of textbooks and reading materials, especially history, geography, civics and literature which should promote nationalism and the idea of unity in diversity reflected by a composite culture. The cultural content of education and some knowledge and appreciation of the main tenets of all world religions could elevate the mind and enrich the spirit. True secularism called for tolerance and sympathetic understanding of beliefs and cultures other than one's own. Pride in one's cultural heritage and the vision of a common future should emanate from educational programmes and practices.

#### **5. Internationalism: Towards a New World Order and Universality**

Maulana Azad had a clear view of the role of education in promoting world unity and world citizenship, which he expressed at the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with Unesco in 1951. He said,

Education is basic to the creation of an atmosphere in which human beings can meet one another on the basis of friendship and equality. Men and women of the present generation have been brought up in an atmosphere of such national exclusiveness that they cannot easily be expected to achieve world unity and world citizenship. They have been trained to think along lines which make it difficult to transcend the limitations of race, class or nationality. If, therefore, we are to achieve world unity, and all agree that without such unity the future of man is dark, all our efforts must be concentrated on educating the future generations for world citizenship.

He suggested that for achieving this end the entire method of teaching history and geography in schools should be changed. The growing child should be made to realize that the whole world was his home which he shared with others, and the wonder of history should make him feel that he belonged to one humanity. He believed that the cult of narrow nationalism conflicted with human progress and that the human mind should be liberated from prejudice and illwill.

It was natural that Maulana Azad, along with Nehru and Radhakrishnan, should have hailed the advent of Unesco and recognized its importance among the organs of the United Nations. He was mainly responsible for inviting the Unesco General Conference to hold its ninth session in New Delhi in 1956, and it was his leadership and inspiration that led to the adoption of the major project for the mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values. This originated from his addresses to Unesco's Round Table Conference on "The Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in East and West" held at New Delhi in 1951.

### **Modalities of Action**

The Constitution of India visualizes a national system of education supported by national policies and appropriate organs of consultation and co-ordination, but by and large the task of implementing policies depended upon the efforts and resources of the States. Maulana Azad's towering personality and political status helped national planning, but could not ensure the actual implementation of national policies by the States. The low percentage of school attendance and the evils of wastage and stagnation in primary schools added to the problem of mass education. The plan formulated by the Central Advisory Board of Education in its report on "Post-war Education Development in India" (Sargent Report) envisaged the provision of universal, free and compulsory elementary education throughout the country within a period of forty years. The All-India Education Conference convened by Maulana Azad in 1948 reduced this period to sixteen years, which was further modified by a directive incorporated in the Constitution calling upon the State to provide for free and compulsory elementary education for all children up to the age of fourteen, within ten years of the commencement of the Constitution. Hopes ran high and efforts were not lacking, but the euphoria of that time came up against stubborn realities. Neither sufficient material resources nor a strong enough political will emerged to surmount those realities. Towards the end of his life, Maulana Azad made a sad confession to a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education:

You would all remember that we have faced one difficulty after another since the first day of Independence. When I assumed charge of Education in 1947, I immediately saw that there could be no solution of our educational problem without the fullest co-operation of the Centre and the Provinces. Education was, no doubt, a provincial subject, but it was my considered opinion that this distinction could be maintained only when our educational targets have been achieved. Until such time, the Central Government should openly recognize that though education is a provincial subject, it must share the responsibility with the provincial governments if we are to meet the

challenge of the time I appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the late B G Kher, then Chief Minister of Bombay, who prepared a scheme for the introduction of universal, elementary and free education in sixteen years provided the Centre undertakes to meet at least thirty per cent of the expenses. I regret to say that we have not been able to give effect to this scheme. India is a democracy where the Cabinet has joint responsibility. I am, therefore, equally responsible with my colleagues for our failure in implementing the proposals of the Kher Committee. I may add that one of our difficulties has been that some of my colleagues regarded education to be a purely provincial subject and did not, therefore, think it necessary that the Central Government should provide adequate funds for it. Even when the Planning Commission was set up, the situation did not at first change. When the first draft of the First Plan was made, education was almost completely ignored. There seemed to be a general view that we should take up only subjects which would give quick returns. Since they held that education could not do this, education was left out of this first draft.

During the Maulana's stewardship of the Ministry of Education, some massive tasks of fact-finding, stock-taking and national planning in the broad field of education were carried out, preparing for some successes in the decade that followed. The work of the committees and commissions at various levels of education, notably for secondary and university education, is well-known. New winds of change began to blow. Special aspects of the problems of education such as the promotion of Gandhian teachings and way of life, introduction of general education courses, Home Science programmes, Institutes of rural higher education, the education of teachers, development of library services, audio-visual education, promotion of Hindi and other national languages, scholarship for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, education and training of the handicapped, special programmes of education of women and girls, development of cultural activities, youth welfare and physical education, reflect the vastness of the range of activities and innovations initiated by the Central Ministry of Education. Some spectacular successes in the field of technical education and scientific research have already been referred to. These developments were facilitated by the planning and administration of education under Maulana Azad's direction.

Perhaps the most precious assets of a Minister are discrimination in the choice not only of policies but of administrators to carry out these policies and the capacity for human relations that generate co-operation and team-spirit. Maulana displayed these qualities in abundance and they were



derived from the remarkable luminosity of his mind, and his compassion and courtesy. He evoked, in turn, much reverence, loyalty and affection, from those who had the good fortune of working with him. Human imperfections are hard to overcome and self-seeking schemers occasionally took advantage of his trust and confidence. But by and large, he inspired and received the best from people who worked for education, science and culture.

For many decades in our country, following the introduction of dyarchy, which entrusted education to the provinces and their elected representatives, the role of the Central Government was minimal in the field of education, confined mainly to the preparation of reports on moral and intellectual progress of the Indian people. In the decade before Independence some fresh winds of change blew, and preparations for the tasks of post-war reconstruction were launched with enthusiasm. The Educational Adviser to the Government of India, who also became ex-officio Secretary to the Government, in order to operate effectively within the steel frame of imperial bureaucracy, organized a department controlled by educationists who were themselves drawn from the world of learning. The Department of Education under the first Education Adviser, Sir John Sargent, had an advisory staff of educationists, assisted at the lower rungs by a few under-secretaries and secretarial assistants who were conversant with the procedures of the Central Secretariat. Maulana Azad, who inherited this system, protected it from the encroachments of the civilian bureaucracy of generalists, and developed it to take charge of the rapidly growing responsibilities in its specialized sectors. His chief aides were men of intellectual eminence who could give creative leadership to their specialized concerns. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, Tara Chand, Humayun Kabir and Khwaja Ghulam-us-Sayyidain were highly respected in the world of learning and steered the course of Indian education, science, and culture during Maulana Azad's stewardship. Educational administration at the state level was influenced by the example of the Centre. Vice-Chancellors, Education Secretaries and Directors of Education in the States were generally selected from the field of education, and received respect and confidence due to their expertise in the field.

The content of education in an Independent India had to be different from the constraints of the colonial period. The new curriculum had to achieve the liberation of the mind. Maulana Azad's concept of the content of education and the scope of the curriculum, followed from his objectives of Indian education outlined above. Character-building through moral and cultural values, the duties and responsibilities of a democratic society, training of citizens and workers for the tasks of national development, strengthening of nationalism through composite culture, tolerance and secularism, and the promotion of internationalism



and world-mindedness for entering the emerging future of a global order and consciousness, were objectives of Indian education that had to be translated into concrete curricular and co-curricular programmes. At every stage the pursuit of excellence and creativity had to be ensured. The following broad ideas were expressed repeatedly by Maulana Azad to alter and enrich the content of education

- (1) At the elementary stage, Basic Education, with its emphasis on *learning by doing*, should form the content
- (2) The re-orientation of secondary education, as proposed by the Secondary Education Commission for training diverse skills and aptitudes, as well as preparation for higher education should guide appropriate curricular programmes
- (3) Educational standards needed to be raised at the university stage, and the curricula broadened and enriched by introducing cultural learning and new opportunities for pursuit of science and technology
- (4) Adult literacy and social education programmes should be suitably devised to create awareness and productivity
- (5) Women's education should receive special attention
- (6) The needs of rural areas with emphasis on agriculture, and crafts should receive attention
- (7) Physical education, recreation and opportunities for games and sports should be built into educational programmes at all stages
- (8) Suitable textbooks and learning and teaching materials should be prepared and made available to all. Steps should be taken to cater to the needs of the handicapped
- (9) Research and evaluation should test the effectiveness and guide the development of curricular and related programmes of education
- (10) Specially important was the reform of the examination system to discourage cramming and remove unnecessary strain on the learners
- (11) The curriculum should encourage independent thinking, a sense of judgement and the process of learning how to learn
- (12) International co-operation especially under the auspices of Unesco, should be welcomed and utilized for the reform of the curriculum

On the ticklish question of the medium of instruction, Maulana Azad's views were sound and practical. Addressing the All-India Educational Conference at New Delhi in January 1948, he said "I hold there is no place for English as a medium of instruction in future India, but at the same time there should be no precipitate action that may damage the cause of education. The replacement of English as a medium of instruction should be gradual and stage by stage so that there is the least possible interruption or interference with the process of education in the country."

Addressing a convocation of Patna University in December 1947, Maulana Azad warned against haste in replacing English and acknowledged the gains that had accrued through the use of English. He said:

However wrongly the English language made its way into our life, the fact remains that it has influenced our mental and educational outlook for the past one hundred and fifty years. This state of affairs, though harmful in some ways, has also benefited us in many ways. We have to acknowledge it without reservations. The greatest advantage that we gained from the adoption of English was that many of the obstacles were automatically removed from our newly born national life. It led to the unification of the whole of the country. All the different parts of the country were brought together, in spite of distance and different languages. In this respect it can be said that English has played the same part in cementing and uniting India as did Persian in Moghul times. Our country is a sub-continent and every part has its separate entity. But the English language has been responsible for creating a bond of mental fellowship among all educated Indians from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. It is a connecting link between all the Provincial Governments, universities, legislative assemblies, public platforms and national organizations. It was this state of affairs that led to the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, which created political awakening and gave a new national life to the country. Then we have been benefited in another direction also. Through English, India cultivated a direct intellectual relationship with Europe and America. Her voice reached the outer world without any intermediary. I do not feel the slightest hesitation in saying that India's position and recognition in the international world are greatly due to our having recourse to the English language, both written and spoken.

Maulana Azad took great interest in the reform of university education. To the All-India Educational Conference, he confided in 1948, "There can be no question of narrow nationalism in the field of knowledge but at the same time we must see that there is no wrong perspective of a nation's past history and culture nor a failure to encourage the highest ideals in national character and civilization." He went on to stress the importance of historical studies.

Nothing is more important today than the reorientation of historical studies from the primary to the highest stages. This is a task which the universities must immediately undertake. The most practical method would be to prepare books in English which can then be translated into all the Indian languages. This would not only mean economy of labour, but also give a uniformity in tone and treatment of the subject.

Azad stressed the need to develop the study of oriental languages and

culture. He said, "Even where oriental subjects have been taught in the universities, they have been treated in a most cavalier fashion. If we look at the plight of Sanskrit or any other of the classical languages in the universities, we cannot deny that this has been done in a most half-hearted fashion in spite of the fact that such studies are essential for a true appreciation of Indian history and culture."

Stressing the need to study Tibetan and Chinese languages, he said,

We must not forget that in the past, India was a centre where the currents of Asiatic thought met and from which flowed out streams which spread to the farthest corner of the Asiatic continent. To appreciate ancient India truly, it is essential to have a knowledge and understanding of other Asiatic languages and cultures as well.

Addressing Central Advisory Board of Education in January 1948, Maulana Azad posed the problem of religious education to be imparted at schools

It is obvious that millions of Indians are not prepared to see their children brought up in an agnostic atmosphere, and, I am sure, you too will agree with them. What will be the consequence if the Government undertakes to impart purely secular education? Naturally, people will try to provide religious education to their children through private sources. How these private sources are working today or are likely to work in the future is already known to you. I know something about it and can say that not only in villages but even in cities, the imparting of religious education is entrusted to teachers who, though literate, are not educated. To them religion means nothing but bigotry. The method of education, too, is such in which there is no scope for a broad and liberal outlook. It is quite plain, then, that the children will not be able to drive out the ideas infused into them in their early stage, whatever modern education may be given to them at a later stage. If we want to safeguard the intellectual life of our country against this danger, it becomes all the more necessary for us not to leave the imparting of early religious education to private sources. We should rather take it under our direct care and supervision. No doubt, a foreign government has to keep itself away from religious education. But a national government cannot divest itself of this responsibility. To mould the growing mind of the nation on the right lines is its primary duty. In India, we cannot have an intellectual mould without religion. But if religious instruction is to be a part of Basic Education, what will be its proportion?

How is to be managed? These are questions which are to be thoroughly considered. Indeed, there will be difficulties in the way. A solution will have to be found.

Maulana Azad entrusted this task to a committee. The final outcome on the problem of religious education went counter to Azad's wishes, and we are now not sure whether the problem was rightly resolved.

Certain sections of the majority community, especially from the North, have accused Maulana Azad of neglect in introducing Hindi universally as a national language in the first flush of Independence. This is quite unfair. While Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of Hindustani had great merit, the Hindi propagated by its zealots was confined to the upper crust of Hindu society in the north, who often sent their own children to English medium schools. Maulana Azad encouraged all measures to make Hindi the official language of the Indian Union. The Ministry of Education set up specialized units for the creation of the Hindi terminology required for the propagation of scientific and technical terms.

I was often present at Maulana Azad's meetings with Pandit Vishva Bandhu Shastri, whose institution in the Punjab had undertaken the monumental task of publishing a Vedic concordance. Maulana took the trouble of learning enough about Vedic studies to give all encouragement and financial aid to the project. With his own cultural roots firmly established in the civilization and traditions of Islam, he learnt much about Hindu religion, culture and literature, and became a firm believer in the composite culture of the new resurgent India.

Maulana Azad himself had no formal schooling. Apart from the guidance of his elders, he chose his own mentors in a lifelong process of learning. He had an instinctive reverence for teachers. Humble, lowly paid teachers could easily meet Maulana Sahib at his residence. Once he described the role of the teacher in the following words:

Ultimately all reform in education depends upon the quality of our teachers. I have mentioned to you the changes we are seeking to bring about in elementary, secondary and university education. These changes will not give the desired result unless there are efficient and devoted teachers to carry them out. Poor wages and loss of social status have been perhaps the main reasons why there has been a fall in the quality of teachers in recent years. You are aware that some measures have already been taken to remedy this state of affairs. We are seeking to establish a national minimum basic salary for elementary school teachers. I was not fully satisfied with what we had done, but I am happy to say that new measures have been proposed and will soon be implemented which will mark substantial progress in this field. Some measures have also been

taken for improving the salaries and conditions of service of university teachers. The problems of teachers in affiliated colleges and secondary schools are also engaging our attention. While we shall continue with our efforts for improving the status, service conditions, and emoluments of teachers at all levels, I would appeal to them that they must also develop a spirit of real service and dedication in the cause of the nation.

Maulana Azad gave solid support to the establishment of institutions for implementing his plans and mobilizing intellectual resources in the service of educational progress. The Central Advisory Board of Education was strengthened in its co-ordinating role. A National Institute of Basic Education was set up to impart advanced training and to conduct research. An All-India Council for Secondary Education was entrusted with the task of reviewing progress in the field of secondary education and offering advice and assistance to state governments. A Central Bureau of Textbook Research was established. A Central Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance promoted research and training programmes. Specialized committees were set up to draw up integrated syllabi for multi-purpose and higher secondary schools and work out suitable programmes for promoting Gandhian teaching. The University Grants Commission was established in 1953. A National Council for Rural Higher Education was set up in 1956. The All-India Council of Technical Education was reorganized and strengthened to guide the rapid development of institutions, including the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur. The Central Institute of Education was established to upgrade teacher training programmes. Library services were extended to numerous areas. The Central Social Welfare Board was established to promote social welfare activities. A central Film Library and a National Board of Audio-Visual Education were set up to prepare and disseminate educational materials. For the purpose of compiling dictionaries of scientific terms in Hindi, a Board of Scientific Terminology was set up in 1950. A central advisory body known as Hindi Shiksha Samiti was set up to advise Government on matters relating to the promotion and the development of Hindi.

In the cultural field three national academies, namely, the Sangeet Natak Akademi dealing with dance, drama and music, the Sahitya Akademi, dealing with literature, and the Lalit Kala Akademi for art were established. The nucleus of a National Museum started functioning. The National Gallery of Modern Art was opened in 1954 and a National Art Treasures Fund set up. A Sanskrit Commission was appointed to promote the study of Sanskrit and facilities for research. The Departments of Anthropology and Archaeology received special attention from the Minister and their activities were expanded. The National Archives of India and the National Library in Calcutta were developed.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations was formed in 1950 to establish and strengthen cultural relations between India and other countries. The Indian National Commission for UNESCO was set up in 1949.

The Ministry's programmes of education and publications were strengthened and training courses in educational statistics were initiated. In the area of youth welfare and physical education, several new programmes were launched, including training courses, students' tours, hiking, mountaineering, drama camps, youth hostels and the annual inter-university youth festivals. A Central Advisory Board of Physical Education and Recreation was set up and a national plan was prepared. An All-India Council of Sports, composed of the presidents of the various sports federations and other bodies of an all-India character, advised the Government on the development of sport.

The establishment of so many specialized institutions at the national level required careful and detailed consideration on Maulana Azad's part. When it is remembered that his time was also claimed by important political issues and national problems outside the scope of his portfolio, one must marvel at his accomplishment as a Minister and a national leader who always found time for anything concerning scholarship and learning.

Both in Parliament and before national bodies like the Central Advisory Board of Education, Maulana Azad pleaded strongly for increased funding of education and gave good reasons for his views. But his efforts were not crowned with success. The allocation to education continued to be lower than in many developing countries, in spite of a rise in population and enrolment, the pleading of the Minister, and the sympathy of legislators. Faulty planning priorities must take the blame for this state of affairs. While technical education and scientific research were relatively well provided for, resources for mass education remained totally inadequate, even though Maulana Azad rightly accorded the highest priority to mass education.

### **A Tribute**

In the foregoing pages, an attempt has been made to describe and assess the contribution of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to Indian education in the first formative decade of Independence. This picture is a mixed one of successes and failures. But the final balance sheet is of credit and confidence, of some sound investments towards the building of a future.

I treasure the memory of a rare human being who appeared an enigma to many but was really an embodiment of simplicity, integrity, sympathy and compassion for the needy and the helpless. Maulana Azad's sensitivity suffered from imputations of communal leanings by some rabid communalists who could not appreciate the hurt caused to him by the partition of India which he, along with Mahatma Gandhi, deplored deeply. The aftermath of partition brought to him concrete problems and complaints



of individuals and sections of the minorities, and he had to deal with these with justice and sympathy. At that time of bitterness this was likely to be misunderstood. His isolation and loneliness gave the impression of pride and disdain. Actually he was more at home with the poor and the deprived than with the ambitious seekers of power who stalked the political landscape. He had much in common with Jawaharlal Nehru, but his introvert temperament and loneliness made a difference. As a Minister he was totally immune from the disbursement of favours to those who angled for patronage without deserving it. He had no political base to build, no relations to favour and no friends to reward. In his time, the Ministry of Education operated like a family with a benevolent patriarch caring for and encouraging its members. For a decade he adorned our nation with luminous mind, indomitable spirit and selfless service. And when he left us suddenly and unexpectedly in 1958 I wrote some words of tribute in the following lines with which I conclude this statement

### *A Celestial Pilgrim*

With luminous mind  
and sparkling spirit  
he came to us from Arab lands  
to make old Ind his beloved home  
in search of some eternal light

Sweet Saraswati, bright Crescent sign  
and cultures from near and far  
were pastures for his restless mind  
in which he roamed with faith and zest  
to gather wisdom and mystic light

Rich harvest of the spirit and mind,  
pursuit of freedom and fraternal feel,  
love and compassion for mankind  
were gathered in a lonesome life  
in quest of truth and poetic leap!



# Religious Ideology and Indian Nationalism

*Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was born into a family of devout Muslims in the holy city of Mecca in 1888. His education (and that of his elder brother Ghulam Yaseen Abu Nasr) began within the sacred precincts of the Kaaba at the tender age of five. His father, Maulana Khairuddin, who was a leader of some consequence, was basically a fundamentalist and a religious fanatic. Both Azad and his brother were taught at home under the direct supervision and guidance of their father, and their education was confined mainly to instruction in religion. It may not be irrelevant to point out at this stage that the Maulana's father was an Indian by birth, whereas his mother was an Arab.

Even after Maulana's parents had migrated from Mecca and settled in Calcutta, the atmosphere of his home was as fanatic as ever before. Since they were an extremely conservative people, there was no limit to the number of restrictions imposed on the members of the household. The children, for instance, were not allowed to read books other than those on religion, and were strictly forbidden from mixing with persons other than the selected few.

Maulana Khairuddin was no doubt a saintly person, he was also a spiritual leader with a sizeable following. In order that he may eventually pass on the mantle to his eldest son, Ghulam Yaseen, the latter was given a thorough grounding in the affairs of priesthood. But Providence had ordained otherwise, on his way to Iraq young Ghulam Yaseen fell seriously ill and died shortly after returning to India. Maulana Khairuddin now looked entirely to his younger son, Abul Kalam, for the fulfilment of his ambition as regards appointment of a spiritual successor. But it seemed that destiny had already earmarked him for an altogether different role. Abul Kalam was full of contempt for the concept of priesthood. Azad stood in open revolt against this institution as he thought it to be a sign of decadence and an impediment to progress and prosperity.

His father was still alive when he left home with the intention of securing for himself the post of editor of some of the journals and newspapers published from Lucknow and Amritsar. His elder brother died in 1906 and his father in 1908, leaving him entirely free to choose his own career. With this newly gained independence he felt a deep and an almost irrepressible urge to explore fresh avenues of thought and action. From the customary study of theological works in Arabic and Persian, which had been his principal preoccupation during his father's lifetime, he now turned to works in Urdu of which he undertook a thorough and systematic study. He began by concentrating on the works of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan which left a considerable impression on him. He was mainly drawn to Sir Syed's views on religion which made a deep impact on his mind. As is well known, Sir Syed Ahmad had appeared on the Indian scene as a great reformer, who was determined to emancipate his co-religionists from the trammels of religious dogmatism and conformist thinking. Instead of advocating traditional learning among Muslims and upholding the time-honoured institutions, he did every thing in his power to awaken the Muslims to a perception of the benefits conferred by rational thinking and modern education.

Maulana Azad had formed such a high opinion of Sir Syed that there came a time when he all but worshipped him as an idol. But this phase did not last long, with a growing acquaintance with different branches of learning and the concomitant expansion of his intellectual horizon, there was a phenomenal change in his attitude and belief. Endowed as he was with an uncommon intelligence, it was impossible for him to accept, without thorough scrutiny, ideas or opinions held by others regardless of their status in society. Conformism has always been the bane of mediocre minds. Once free from Sir Syed's influence he set about plotting a new course of action for himself.

It must be confessed that in his quest for newer avenues, Maulana occasionally forsook the right path, went astray, and even stumbled. The very foundation of his belief in God and religion was rudely shaken. But this, too, proved to be a temporary phase; after passing through a period of anguish and intense mental conflict which lasted for several years, he, once again, reverted to his old faith. This reversal was marked by a far more profound understanding of the religion which he had all but forsaken earlier. To use his own words

Under normal circumstances, religion is what we inherit from our forefathers as part of a legacy. I got mine in this way. But I was not satisfied with the beliefs of my ancestors since my thirst proved to be more than could be quenched by them. I, therefore, felt constrained to set aside traditional beliefs and dogmas and to find out a way of my own ... Progress along such

a path is invariably attended by doubt and ends in disbelief and denial. Instead of forging ahead we get bogged down in the middle. Our only reward is utter dismay and disillusion. Such was my own experience, but I never faltered in my quest for Truth and forged ahead until I got the better of my frustrations and misgivings. At last, after passing through a period of intense mental agony, I reached a stage, when, all of a sudden, I became aware of a change coming over me, leading to a complete reversal of my attitude. A new horizon opened before my eyes. At present there is a wide variety of religions — there is one which we inherit from our forefathers and are quite content to follow. There is another which may be termed geographical religion since it is followed only by the people of a particular geographical unit or region who accept its tenets as a matter of course. “If you like”, I said to myself, “You may, without the least hesitation, follow their examples.” But to resume our analysis of some of the existing religions, there is in existence a religion whose only purpose and justification seems to be to lend its name to facilitate the filling up of requisite forms by the masses during census. Yet again, one comes across a religion so crippled by customs and so embarrassed by conventions that it is just a bundle of rituals, so to speak, and nothing more. “For Heavens sake”, I told myself, “Do not criticize or meddle with it, rather adopt it, venerate it, and give it your full support.” Nevertheless, and quite apart from the array of pseudo-religions enumerated above, there stands out, above and by itself, a religion which does not suffer from the limitations of the above mentioned creeds. And since a religion must have an appellation and a name, let us call it the *True Religion*.

(*Ghubar-i-Khatir*, Sahitya Akademi, pp 38-40)

Maulana was immensely proud of whatever he achieved through the exercise of his intellect and his discerning judgement. Even after he had regained his faith in his religion, he never ceased to scoff at the conformist disposition of his co-religionists and their total surrender to heresy and outdated customs in matters of faith.

In order to get a clear picture of Maulana Azad's concept of religion, it would be best to turn to the words of his close friend and literary colleague Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi,

As regards religion, the Maulana resolutely stood by the convictions of his God-fearing and enlightened ancestors whom he considered to be inviolable and sacrosanct. In belief he never deviated from this path but in practice he was very

liberal In India those following their enlightened ancestral path are known as *Ahl-e-Hadith*, in Arab countries, *Salafi*.  
(*Zikr-e-Azad*, Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, p. 225)

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had implicit faith in the essential unity or oneness of all religions since there was only one God who created the Universe. But because different religions emerged, or rather were conveyed by the prophets at different times and different places, each with its peculiar social and cultural ethos, there was bound to be considerable diversity among them. Each conformed to the special needs and requirements of the time and place to which it belonged. To the Maulana there was only one God, call Him the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute Truth or what you will, but man's conception has, at all times, suffered from the gross inadequacy of his intellect. Convinced as he was of the essential unity or oneness of all religions, *Wahdat-e-Din*, Maulana nevertheless allowed for and even reconciled himself to the great diversity of form and mode of worship found among religions the effect of the given circumstances.

There is but one God and He has no partner. It is He who has created the Universe and it is He who controls the destiny of all living things. Therefore it is Him, and Him alone, that we should worship.

In his commentary on *Surah-e-Fatiha* which occurs in the first volume of his monumental work, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Maulana Azad gives a clear indication of his own views on the subject.

Few things have been given as much prominence in the pages of the Holy Quran or as often repeated as the fact that the purpose of revelation was not to found, establish, or give birth to a new religion. There is little doubt that the Quran expressly forbids and disallows any kind of isolation or separation of religions into mentally antagonistic units or groups. This is the one and only path from the beginning shown by the founders of all religions. And the object of the holy Quran was to acknowledge, equally, all the Prophets and the Holy Books. The Quran avers that there is only a single God — The Eternal Truth — and there is one true gospel. But God's message has been conveyed to us (at various times and various places) through different languages. If we believe or have faith only in our own Prophet, to the exclusion of other messengers of God, our action will amount to both acceptance and rejection of the one and the same Truth, embodied in the Supreme Being, for the ultimate source and fountainhead of all Truth is one and only one. Small wonder that the Quran has, time

and again, denounced any attempt at dissociation or alienation of one Prophet from others and declared that all such acts were apostasies. And this is precisely the reason why the Quran has repeatedly asserted that people should not forsake or turn their backs on their own religion and adopt others, rather they should always be true to, and sincerely believe in their own religion. If everyone fully obeyed the aforesaid injunction of their respective religions, the object of the Quran would be fully realised. As already indicated, the Quran, according to its own admission, does not profess to convey or deliver any new message, on the contrary its message is the same old universal message that has been conveyed by different religions during different periods of human history.

There are many instances that exemplify Maulana Azad's broad-mindedness and tolerance in matters of faith. It would be worth our while to take a look at some of them here.

The basic assumption of Islam is that Mohammad is the Messenger of God and last in the line of apostolical succession. After him there shall be no Prophet or Prophets, no divine revelation in the form of a Holy Book, nor will there be any new religion with a distinct doctrine or mode of worship. The Quran, in fact, unequivocally declares that it is the completion of the Divine Revelation and Islam is the sum total of all other religions, it enshrines the essence of each one of them. Maulana was nevertheless aware of the existence, both during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam and after his death, of persons posing as messengers of God, who did their best to sow the seeds of sectarianism and communal strife. For example in Quadian which is a small town in the Indian province of Punjab, a person known as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he was the Prophet of God. When this matter was brought to the notice of Maulana he did not consider it fair to brand his followers (called Quadianis) renegades, who had forfeited their right to be called Muslims. He merely regarded them as misguided people who have gone astray. Let us consider what the Maulana states in one of his decrees:

I look upon the Quadianis simply as a bunch of misguided people who, notwithstanding their claim to be true Muslims, have, in fact, lost their way. I only consider the fanatics among them to be guilty of apostasy. I am not prepared to label or call them non-Muslims. Do they not believe in one God, and in Mohammad as God's messenger or Prophet? Do they not have faith in the Day of Judgement or turn towards the Kaaba while praying? (*Zikr-e-Azad*, pp. 266-267)

For a first-hand assessment of the matter the Maulana personally went to Quadian and had a long discussion with the

self-appointed Prophet of Islam, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed. He returned unconvinced.

The interpretation of the term kafir has often been the cause of bitter controversies leading to acrimonious exchanges among the Muslims. There is no dearth of hardboiled zealots ever ready to brand their co-religionists as kafirs if they fail or refuse to fall in with their beliefs. Maulana, on the other hand, always showed extreme reluctance in calling even non-Muslims kafirs. Soon after the appearance of his epoch-making weekly *Al-Hilal*, Maulana was asked to indicate who, in the eyes of the Quran, were kafirs? His reply to this appeared in *Al-Hilal* of 30 September, 1912, p 205, under the heading "The meaning of the term *kufir* as used in the Quran"

One striking feature of the Quran is that for the most part its statements have relevance to future ages as well, which means that the Book is not for one particular age but for all times. Consequently, we find that verses (Quranic) that were meant for the infidels of Mecca (*Kuffar-e-Makka*) and those that relate to other contemporary events, carry messages that have significance for other ages as well.

I have dwelt upon the matter at some length because I intend to bring home to my readers the actual meaning and sense of the word *Kuffar* as used in the Holy Book. It is the pagans of Mecca, people who would not believe in the unity or oneness of God who stood in open defiance of Islam, and condemned its teachings who are referred to as kafirs. They were just a band of savages who had terrorised innocent believers by their brutal acts, a gang of evil doers who thrived on falsehood, treachery and deceit. It was imperative, therefore, to warn the barbarians of the consequences of their misdeeds and of the fate awaiting them. One of the first things to strike readers of the Holy Quran is the precision and exactness with which the term *Ahl-e-Kitab* and *kuffar* have been defined. Equally striking is the fact that the word has been used in exactly the same sense throughout the Book. It is used to mean the pagans of Mecca who vehemently opposed the idea of one God, and fought tooth and nail to discredit Islam, whereas the term *Ahl-e-Kitab* has been used to denote the Jews and the Christians, who have always been given preferential treatment in the Holy Quran.

Until quite recently, pictorial representation of men and women or of any living thing was considered to be strictly forbidden in Islam by conservative Muslims. Three dimensional representations of the human figure in wood, stone, or bronze, in the form of a statue was an unpardonable offence. Maulana's personal opinion, however, was that



the Quran does not object to the representation of the human (or animal) form by painters or sculptors so long as the endeavour does not become an obsession with the practitioners of the art, or gives rise to or encourages idolatrous practices like image worship. He felt no qualm about getting himself photographed or about printing various kind of pictures in his journal *Al-Hilal*. In the first edition of Maulana Azad's magnum opus, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, there was a drawing of Zulqarnain (Cyrus The Great, according to Maulana) which had to be deleted from subsequent copies of the book with a view to silencing adverse criticism. As he had tasks of far greater importance ahead of him, and the future of the entire nation was at stake, he felt it would be foolish to waste time in pointless controversies and petty quarrels.

### **The Political Life of the Maulana**

We shall now pass on to a consideration of Maulana Azad's role in national politics and his religious life against the background of the social ethics and religious convictions of his forbears on the one hand, and his own theological studies on the other. Indeed, the latter are circumstances we cannot afford to ignore if we wish to have a clear idea of Maulana's way of thinking.

There can be little doubt that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had pledged himself and was fully committed to national integration and inter-communal harmony and to the principle of co-operation at all levels. He was throughout an ardent advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity, and did everything in his power to promote amity and friendship among them. He constantly appealed to both to co-operate with each other in different spheres of life. To facilitate uninhibited friendship and collaboration between the two communities, Maulana wanted the Hindus and Muslims to look upon themselves as members of a single homogenous group or fraternity to which he gave the name of *Ummat-e-Wahida* (one nation). In support of this he cited the example of the Defence Treaty which the Prophet of Islam had entered into with the non-Muslim tribes inhabiting the outskirts of Medina, just after *Hijrat* (the Prophet's historic migration to Medina).

In his presidential speech delivered on the occasion of the Khilafat Conference at Agra in 1921, Maulana declared:

The need of the hour is that the seven crore Muslims living in India, should establish such close ties and develop such fellow feeling with the twenty-two crore Hindus, that they may henceforth be reckoned as one single nation and country, as inseparable parts of one combined and indivisible whole. Muslims living in India ought to know that whatever Prophet Mohammad has said is next in importance only to the decree



of God. These are the very words dictated by the holy Prophet as one of the terms of the Treaty I hereby promise to make complete peace with the tribes dwelling in the neighbourhood of Medina and express full agreement with the stipulations set down by them. We, the signatories of the aforesaid Treaty, genuinely desire to combine and unite as members of a single band, group, or community (Ummat-e-Wahida)

It is a fact that long before he had joined the Khilafat Movement in 1920, and taken part in the Indian National Conference, the Maulana had associated himself with the Secret Organisation formed by the Hindu revolutionaries of Bengal. As a Muslim he was not fully trusted at the beginning, but with the passage of time, all doubts were dispelled and he began to be looked upon as a loyal supporter of the freedom movement. It is worth mentioning in this connection, that Maulana not only provided the organisation with financial help but procured arms for its members. These events belong to the period when through his journals *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, Maulana was busy calling the Muslims to participate in the war of Independence (*Jihad-e-Hurriyat*), and trying to justify his action by demonstrating that it was in consonance with the teachings of the Quran.

The year 1912, and those that followed, found Maulana urging Indian Muslims to cast their lot with their fellow countrymen who were engaged in the freedom struggle. He conveyed this message first through *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* (1912-16), then through his other journals *Paigham* and *Payam*, and also through his discourses on religion. During his imprisonment at Ranchi, which lasted about four years (1916-19), he kept up his campaign of enlisting the support of the Indian Muslims for the Quit India Movement. He set all doubts at rest by asserting that by joining the fight for freedom, the Muslims will be acting in strict accordance with the precepts of Islam. He explained that few things are so just and honourable in the eyes of Islam as the struggle for (national) Independence. The need of the hour was to rise en masse and unite against the forces of imperialism. With this in view, he formed an organisation of freedom fighters which he called *Hizbullah* or "Army of God" and actually started recruiting volunteers who were required to sign a bond before they could be registered as its members.

To make the Muslims participate in the freedom struggle, Maulana decided that they should have an *Imam* or spiritual head who could provide them with the much needed leadership. In the absence of a suitable person he decided to offer himself for the office. Soon after assuming the office he came to be acknowledged as *Imam-ul-Hind* or spiritual head of the Muslims of India by eminent scholars and theologians of the time, the most notable among them being Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangi Mahal, Lucknow and Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deoband.

Maulana's efforts, Herculean, if anything, to arouse Indian Muslims from inaction and lethargy, and to organise them into a body of disciplined souls should not be misconstrued as an attempt on his part to pave the way for establishment of Muslim rule in India. What was uppermost in his mind was freedom for his country. Once freedom was attained he wanted Indians as a whole, not any particular religious or ethnic group, to be entrusted with the task of governing the country. This was the essence of Maulana Azad's nationalism and it was fully endorsed by like-minded scholars and academicians of the renowned centre of Islamic learning, Deoband. Maulana made it clear that the freedom struggle ought not to be treated merely as a nationalistic obligation that we owe to our country, but as a religious obligation as well, so far as the Muslims were concerned. He saw to it that his co-religionists were mentally prepared for it. This was indeed, a unique achievement on his part because most Indian Muslims had already come under the spell of what was known as the Aligarh Movement and had kept themselves aloof from Indian National Congress and the freedom movement. They were unwilling to make a common cause with their compatriots and fight by their side. The main reason behind his success, however, was that in order to achieve his goal he prevailed upon the Muslims to move along the paths shown by the Quran. In other words, he succeeded because he was able to convince his co-religionists that the movement for national Independence had the full blessing of their religion and it was something that was expected of them as dutiful Muslims. Evidence of Maulana's success in this regard is seen in the rise, for the first time in the history of the country, of the Khilafat Movement which quickly gathered momentum, spread far and wide, and, ultimately, linked itself with the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

During the days of the First World War, and before the beginning of the Khilafat Movement in India, a government was formed in exile in Kabul, with the sole aim of establishing democracy in the subcontinent once freedom was achieved. Raja Mahendra Pratap was nominated as its President, and Maulana Mahmud Hasan's trusted pupil Maulana Obaid Ullah Sindhi went all the way to Kabul to establish this government. Maulana Azad was also one of the brains behind this scheme. His reliance on the directions given in the Holy Quran (and the frequent recurrence of Quranic references) in calling the Muslims to join the freedom struggle, his attempt to form a party of honest Muslims under the name of *Hizbullah*, his close association with the Khilafat Movement, should not, therefore, be interpreted as part of a master plan for establishing Muslim rule in India.

In 1920, Maulana had drawn up a scheme that would enable Hindus and Muslims to unite and act jointly in the freedom struggle. Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi has stated in his book *Zikr-e-Azad*.

The keynote of Maulana Azad's political formula was that

Muslims living in Hindustan must be organised into a disciplined body by following the paths shown by Islam. What was needed was an Imam who would show them the correct path and lead them along it. It would, then, be obligatory for every Muslim to submit to his Imam's will and obey him without question. Maulana felt that Muslims on the whole will not hesitate to adopt this formula if they could be convinced by arguments based on the Quran and the *Hadith*, that without an Imam to guide them they will not be able to conduct their lives in accordance with the wishes of the Quran and will die as pagans. When a large number of Muslims accepted their Imam, the Imam would form a pact with the Hindus and declare Jihad against the British. And the joint effort of both Hindus and Muslims would defeat the British. (p 24)

The Maulana appointed his trusted friend and ally Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi to act as his deputy in the United Provinces, empowering him to receive, on oath, the allegiance of Muslims willing to offer their services for the holy war of Independence. These solemn swearing-in ceremonies were for the first time held at Lucknow, and, within a couple of months, hundreds of Muslims had bound themselves in an oath to their regional Imam. But this did not last. Soon the practice of recruiting volunteers among Muslims on an oath of allegiance came to an end. Maulana was arrested in Calcutta on the 10th of December 1921, and a case was started against him for spreading sedition and similar offences. His reply to the charges, which was submitted in writing to the magistrate trying him at Calcutta, came to be known as *Quol-e-Faisal*. Besides being printed in India it was printed also in Cairo and Istanbul in Arabic and Turkish languages. As is well known, Gandhiji not only fully endorsed the contents of Maulana's celebrated reply, but spoke very highly of the same. Here Maulana had made several assertions of far-reaching consequence. He said:

I want to make it clear that the main objective of *Al-Hilal* was to bring home to its readers the fact that there were only two options open to them, emancipate the country from British rule or perish. The campaign for religious revival which Gandhiji had launched and with which he is preoccupied at present was already brought to a successful conclusion in 1914, by *Al-Hilal*. It is a remarkable coincidence that both the Hindus and the Muslims came to the forefront as a powerful force for the first time, and started their agitation in right earnest, as soon as they began discarding customs that had been so assiduously acquired from the West and turned their attention towards a serious study of their scriptures.

In order to prepare the Muslims and Hindus for an active role in the freedom struggle, both Maulana and Gandhiji were doing everything in their power to foster among them the love of religion and a true esteem for its ideals, which, if realised, was bound to bring about some sort of religious revival in the country. Both the great leaders had before them one and the same objective, to deliver the subcontinent from foreign domination, and, at the same time, to bring Hindus and Muslims together as one nation. As has already been indicated, Maulana Azad was against the idea of establishing Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent. On his part, Gandhiji, too, stood resolutely against those wishing to establish Hindu Raj in India. Both leaders employed identical means for the attainment of a common objective which was to rescue the country from the stranglehold of British rule.

It is true that there are striking references to Pan-Islamism in the speeches and writings of Maulana Azad which have given rise to all sorts of speculations and misunderstandings on the part of some people. To account for this phenomenon we must consider the fact that besides Sir Syed Ahmad, the men who had influenced the Maulana most were Jamaluddin Afghani, the Egyptian leader Mufti Mohammed Abduh, and Allama Rashid Riza, the latter two men being themselves influenced by Jamaluddin Afghani. These men had before them a single objective—to liberate Islamic countries by helping them to throw off the yoke of British imperialism. What we observe in the speeches and writings of Maulana are, in fact, echoes of this anti-imperialistic movement. Independence for Islamic countries and freedom for the Indian subcontinent were not separate issues, but closely linked with each other. This is precisely the reason why there was not an Indian who did not come forward to register his protest, when, after the conclusion of the First World War, Britain wanted to lay hands upon the tottering Ottoman Empire and to abolish the Khilafat. It is worth pondering over, that Hindus should make a common cause with Muslims in a matter with which they were not even remotely concerned. Under the wise stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress, taking full cognizance of the inherent relationship between the two movements, felt that to extend their protection to the Khilafat movement against the repressive measures of the British, amounted to helping the campaign launched by Muslims the world over to liberate their Khilafat from British domination. In order, therefore, to pressurise the British to accede to the just demands of those engaged in the freedom struggle outside India, the Congress High Command advised Indians to take part in the Khilafat movement. One good result of this policy was that Indian Muslims began to shed their misgivings and decided to join hands with the followers of Indian National Congress in a joint bid to obtain freedom for the country. Both Hindus and Muslims thus stood side by side on a common

political platform. Indeed, the fusion of the two communities was so complete and perfect that it is still remembered by many with a sense of nostalgia.

The Khilafat in Turkey came to an abrupt end on 3rd March, 1924, partly as an aftermath of the socio-political revolution engineered by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk. This event struck at the root of the Khilafat movement in India, draining it of its life-blood, so to speak. Although a spent force, the movement had, nevertheless, done much good to the nation, a fact that was duly recognised by all. For example, after his release from jail, Gandhiji had this to say in the April, 1924 issue of his journal *Young India*:

Even if I had the powers of a Prophet, and, besides possessing a knowledge of hidden things I could foresee future events and had known the fate awaiting the Khilafat movement, I would have continued to work for it as assiduously as ever. It is my conviction that it was this movement that had aroused Indians from the state of stupor and lassitude. Now I will not allow my people to go to sleep again.

The Khilafat movement had come to an end but the national leaders in India continued to nurture friendly relations with their counterparts in the Islamic world, and to take active interest in its affairs, especially in the affairs of the Arab countries. They gave constant support to the freedom movement in the Arab countries including Palestine. In 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru openly declared,

The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of the world conflict as India's struggle for freedom.

Similarly, Mahatama Gandhi categorically stated that Palestine belonged to Palestinians in the same way that England belonged to the English or France belonged to the French. About the same time Maulana Azad started an Arabic fortnightly, *Al-Jamia* from Calcutta under the editorship of Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, to promote Arab struggle against British imperialism. In 1925, the Indian National Congress sent its team, which was composed of two Congress leaders, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, to Syria, to enquire into the suppression of Syrian people by the French occupying forces.

Maulana Azad was strictly against restricting the scope of religion. He was also averse to the exploitation of religion for political gains. His directive to the Muslims to participate in the freedom movement, came from the pages of the Quran, and was in strict accordance with the spirit of Islam. These were lessons of universal freedom, brotherhood and progress. At the root of Maulana Azad's religious theory was his belief that

religion does not either advocate or encourage division between man and man, on the contrary the lesson it imparts is one of unity and universal brotherhood. And herein lies the explanation of the Maulana's uncompromising stance *vis-a-vis* partition. The concept of national Independence at the cost of partition was totally alien to his way of thinking. He was sad about the prospect of a separate Muslim state within the subcontinent, because he was able to foresee its consequences. In what was to be his last book, *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad spoke at some length of the harmful effects of partition and the resulting alienation from one another of people who have lived together for centuries.

There is no better way of concluding this discussion than by quoting Jawaharlal Nehru about Maulana Azad's contribution to the movement for National Independence with his Islamic touch:

His words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation. That ferment had already started because of events in Turkey, Egypt and Iran, as well as the development of the Indian National Movement. Azad gave a definite trend to it by pointing out that there was no conflict between Islam and sympathy for Islamic countries and Indian Nationalism (*Discovery of India*, p. 290).



# Contribution to Indian Secularism

*B.N. Pande*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a scholar by inheritance. By the time he was sixteen, he had completed his course of studies, had a perfect command of Arabic and Persian languages, and had started teaching higher philosophy, mathematics and logic to a group of fifteen students. It was at this time that he read the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Sir Syed's writings inspired him to study modern science, philosophy, and literature. With determination, he learnt enough English to study, in the original, modern science, history and philosophy. He pursued these studies with vigour and developed a scientific approach to modern day problems. Describing his mental condition at this period he writes.

This was a period of great mental crisis for me. I was born into a family which was deeply imbued with religious traditions. All the conventions of traditional life were accepted without question, and the family did not like the least deviation from orthodox ways. I could not reconcile myself to prevailing customs and beliefs, and my heart was full of a new sensation of revolt. The ideas that I had acquired from my family and early training could no longer satisfy me. Almost instinctively I began to move out of my family orbit and seek my own path<sup>1</sup>

Young Abul Kalam began to question himself. If religion expresses a universal truth, why should there be differences and conflicts among men professing different religions? Why should each religion claim to be the sole depository of truth and condemn all others as false?<sup>2</sup>

For nearly three years this mental unrest continued. He passed from one phase to another. Ultimately all the bonds imposed on his mind by family and upbringing were shattered. Free from the shackles of rigid

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<sup>1</sup> Azad, A K , *India Wins Freedom*, p 3

<sup>2</sup> Ibid , p 3



beliefs he became 'Azad'. The freedom of thought and action introduced him to new vistas of activities. He came in contact with political revolutionary leaders like the venerable Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and Aurobindo Ghosh. This instilled in his heart love for the freedom of India and made him an ardent revolutionary. He helped to organize secret revolutionary societies in many important towns of northern India. In order to study political movements in Islamic countries he proceeded on a tour of Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Turkey. He also visited Paris. He came in contact with the followers of Mustafa Kamal Pasha and met leaders of the Young Turk movement. All these contacts made him an ardent nationalist and a devotee of democracy and secularism, which led to his opposing pro-British Muslim communalism. At the age of 24 he launched *Al-Hilal*, which created a revolutionary stir among the masses. The Aligarh school of Muslim leadership felt threatened. The Government demanded a heavy security from *Al-Hilal*. The security furnished was forfeited, and, in 1915, *Al-Hilal* press was confiscated. He started another paper *Al-Balagh*, which also met with the same fate. But these papers created their impact. They awakened the Muslim masses and instilled in them feelings of patriotism, communal harmony, and composite culture.

Maulana Azad wrote,

The Government now felt that they could not stop my activities by using only *The Press Act*. Accordingly, they resorted to *The Defence of India Regulations*, and, in April 1916, externed me from Calcutta. The Governments of Punjab, Delhi, U.P. and Bombay had already prohibited me from entering these provinces under the regulations. The only place I could go to was Bihar and I went to Ranchi. After another six months, I was interned in Ranchi, and remained in detention until 31st December 1919.<sup>3</sup>

This long internment of three and a half years gave Maulana Azad an opportunity to study various problems which faced the country. He delved into the glorious traditions of Indian secularism. "It is not enough that one should respect his own religion but one should have equal respect for others' religion also". He realized that in the Indian context secularism does not mean lack of religion, but *equal respect for all religions* (*sarva dharma sambhav*). His deep study of Quran had also led him to the same conclusion. In his monumental work on the Quran he has convincingly argued this point. "The Quran is very emphatic that no compulsion should be exercised in matters of religion." The Quranic injunction is, *La ekraha fiddin Lakum dinakum wale yadin*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 8

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 3-256.

There must be no compulsion exercised  
In matters of religion. Unto you  
Your faith be welcome, so my faith to me.

Regarding respect for all religions, the Quran says:

We believe in what hath been revealed to us and revealed to  
you. Our God and your God is one and to him are we self-  
surrendered.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding basic oneness of all religions the Quran states.

This that I am now uttering unto you  
The Holy Quran, it is to be found  
Within the ancient seers' writings too  
For teachers have been sent to every race  
Of human beings. No community  
Is left without a warner and a guide  
And aught of difference we do not make  
For disagreement there is none 'twixt them,  
Between these Prophets. All that have been sent,  
Have been so sent but one truth to proclaim  
I, verily the I All-one, am God  
There is no other God than I,  
And I alone should be adored by all  
Teachers are sent to each race that they may  
Teach it in its own tongue, so there may be  
No doubt as to the meaning in its mind.  
An Arabic Quran is thus revealed,  
That Mecca and the cities around may learn  
With ease the truth put in the words they know.  
For had we made them in a foreign tongue  
They surely would have made objections thus  
Why have not these revelations been made clear?

Azad states that the obvious significance of this remarkable text is that the essentials are common to all religions; that truth is universal, and not the monopoly of any one race or teacher, that non-essentials vary with time, place, and circumstances, that the same fundamental truths have been revealed by God in different scriptures, in different languages, through different teachers, in different nations.<sup>6</sup> The Quran gives the positive counsel:

Let all of us ascend towards, and meet  
Together on the common ground of those  
High truths and principles which we all hold<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Quran* , 29-45

<sup>6</sup> Azad, A K , *Tarjuman-ul-Quran, Sura-e-Fatiha*

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 11 62

Verily, all who faithfully believe  
 In God, and Day of judgment, and do good,  
 Be they Jews, Christians, Sabians or Muslims,  
 They shall have their reward from the Lord God.  
 There is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.  
 We do believe that which has been revealed  
 To us, and also what has been revealed  
 To you. Your God and our God is one,  
 For sure, and unto him we both submit <sup>8</sup>

Summarizing the above, Maulana Azad says, "If humanity is to be brought together it will only be on the basis of mutual understanding, especially in matters of fundamental belief. The philosophical understanding of the nature of ultimate reality, and the practice of love, regardless of the distinction of creed, community, and nationality, these are the basic teachings of the Quran."<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the *Namaz* Maulana Azad states that the prayers are offered at prescribed hours, by turning the face in the direction of the Kaaba. But the Prophet Mohammad, although he enjoined this for common practice, taught that it was not spiritually essential. For indeed, the Quran says.

*Wal-illah-il mashriqu w-al maghriqu, fa aina mā towallu fa  
 summā wajh-ullahi, inn-Allāhā waseun alim. Laisal birra an  
 towallu wujuha-kum qibal-al-mashriqi w-al-maghribi wa lak-  
 innal birra man āmana b-illāhi w-al-yaum-il-ākhirī w-al-ma-  
 layakatī w-al-kitabī w-an-nabiyīna* <sup>10</sup>

Since God is omnipresent, all pervading,  
 Since He is in the East as well as the West,  
 Whichever way ye turn, God's Face is there;  
 His presence doth pervade the Universe.  
 It is not righteousness to turn the face  
 To East or West, but to believe in God,  
 And on the Day of Judgment when you must  
 The consequence of your good deeds and ill  
 Meet with unfailingly; and to have faith  
 In angels, scriptures, and the prophets too.

According to Maulana Azad, the Quran assures us that Islam is not new. God revealed it in earlier times to peoples of other countries through Prophets sent to them. Hence this religion is eternal (*sanatan*) and

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<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 29:49

<sup>9</sup> Azad, A K, *Sura-e-Fatiha*, ("Quran Aur Dharmik Matbhed"), *Vishvavani*, February, 1941

<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 2:117

immutable. It was declared to every people through the messengers of God, as stated in many verses of the Quran. This faith is common to all the people of the world, for truth is one and ever abiding. The need for revealing it, again, through Mohammad arose because the people to whom it was previously revealed had corrupted it. They had deviated from the truth of the oneness of God, a truth which must be followed in thought, word, and deed, and not merely repeated by word of mouth.

Maulana Azad further stresses that besides this faith (*din*), the Quran lays down the law (*shara*), which is the external form of the faith, and which regulates man's conduct and prescribes the standards of action. But the law is relative to time and place. It varies according to the social circumstances and the mental capability of a people. In the matter of ritual and worship, therefore, people follow different ways, and the Quran recommends that there ought to be no ground for dispute regarding such matters. The Quran expressly states that God has made for every group or nation a different law and standard. If God wished He could have made one law for all.<sup>11</sup>

In his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* Azad says;

The principle underlying faith in God (*Din-i-Ilahi*) is brotherhood and unity of the human race, not difference and hatred. All the Prophets of God who appeared on earth gave the same lesson, i.e., all human beings are one people, and the Supporter of all of them is one God.<sup>12</sup>

He writes further,

God wishes to establish this truth in the mind of everyone, that differences in thought and action are national characteristics of the human race. These differences are present in every aspect of life, including religion. It is not, therefore, proper to consider these differences as the yardstick for truth and falsehood.<sup>13</sup>

And,

The way of belief is to accept the truth of all the Prophets and not to deny any one of them. The way of disbelief is to deny any one or all of them.<sup>14</sup>

In conversations with Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, Azad had stated:

*Hadith* cannot be the source of law for the whole of human society. The Quran is responsible for universal guidance, but the Quran contains only a limited number of laws. The reason is that no code of laws can apply to the entire world because

<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 24 35, 7 13, 46.10, 31 16

<sup>12</sup> Azad, A K, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol I, p 400

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 375.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 150 3,4

of differences in times and conditions. Nor can such a code be useful. This explains why the authority to suspend the operation of the authoritative laws of the Quran has been entrusted to the Imam of the Muslims. For example, *Ahl-i-Hadith* amended the law of divorce and prohibited the severance of the hand of a thief.<sup>15</sup>

Maulana Azad made it clear that the faith (*Din*) is universal and eternal; he draws some important conclusions from this principle. In the first place, this faith requires a living realization of the providence and power of God, the recognition that God is one and only, master and sovereign. Secondly, such a faith expels all fear of worldly authority. A Muslim who surrenders his will to God and none other, cannot live as a slave. He has only one alternative, freedom or death. Thirdly, the faith of a Muslim is a covenant he has made with God, which, in all circumstances, is binding on him. He has been selected to spread love and unity among mankind and not to promote strife and violence.

In 1919, Maulana Azad had said that the demands of religion are unity and freedom. But Muslims were everywhere in chains, and, all over the world the deadly fingers of Imperialism were at their throats, strangling them to death. The freedom of four hundred million Muslims of Asia and Africa was at stake. Azad believed that the emancipation of the Muslims was impossible without the Independence of India. The Independence of India, however, could not be achieved without the unity of the Hindus and Muslims. To achieve this unity a secular approach had to be developed and an equal respect for each other's religion had to be cultivated.

Meanwhile, Maulana Maudoodi and others were proclaiming that cultural, social, and religious unity between Hindus and Muslims was neither possible nor desirable, for such unity would destroy their faith. It was against the teachings of Islam. Challenging their contention, Maulana Azad said,

The Quran teaches that all religions are, in essence, identical, however much they may have drifted from their original purity. The Muslims are required to show equal reverence to all the Prophets and the Books that came before the advent of Mohammad and the Quran. Islam brings peace to the world and not the sword. It expressly prohibits the use of force in propagating religion and does not approve disrespect to the places of worship of the non-Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

So far as the practice of the Prophet is concerned, Azad pointed out that when the Muslim community of Medina was threatened by the non-

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<sup>15</sup> Malihabadi, Abdul Razzaq, *Zikr-e-Azad*, p. 233

<sup>16</sup> *The Holy Quran*, 114:2

Muslim tribes of Mecca, Mohammad entered into a solemn contract with the non-Muslim tribes in the neighbourhood of Medina on these terms:

With the tribes which dwell in the neighbourhood of Medina we make peace, we make an agreement that all of us desire to join together to form an *Ummat-i-Wahida*, a united nation <sup>17</sup>

Such was Azad's view concerning the religious aspect of the national problem. In support of this conclusion he wrote an article, "Islam and Nationalism", in which he discussed the evolutionary process of social development. He believed that in its evolution, society passes through three main stages. During its first stage, society is organized on the basis of kinship, from maternalistic family to paternalistic family, clan, and tribe. The second stage begins with territory taking the place of kinship, uniting the group to the state, to the region, and to the nation. The third stage is that of universalism. Thus both religion and science indicate the necessity and desirability of nationalism, though not of an aggressive type, to protect the individual and help him seek his personal welfare, both moral and material <sup>18</sup>

In consequence, Hindu-Muslim unity became a strong conviction and a deep passion with him. In 1912, when he plunged into politics with the launching of his weekly *Al-Hilal*, the main planks in his programme were Hindu-Muslim unity, communal harmony, "secularism of politics, and national and emotional integration. He declared

I am a Muslim and I feel proud of the fact that I have inherited the glorious traditions extending over 1300 years. I am not prepared to allow its least part to be lost. As a Muslim I live in its religious and cultural orbit in which I hold a special place. I am not prepared to permit anyone to interfere with it. With all these sentiments I possess another sentiment which has been produced by the realities of my life. The spirit of Islam does not prohibit it. On the other hand, it directs me on this way. I feel proud that I am an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible united nationality of India. I am an important element in this united nationality. Without me, the temple of its greatness remains incomplete. I am an essential factor in its structure, a claim which I can under no circumstances abandon.<sup>19</sup>

In another passage, he draws attention to the common history of Hindus and Muslims spreading over eleven hundred years, during which every

<sup>17</sup> Malihabadi, Abdul Razzaq, *Zikr-e-Azad*, p. 141

Presidential Address at the Provincial Khilafat Conference, Agra, 1921.

<sup>18</sup> Azad, A K, "Islam and Nationalism", *Al-Balagh* Agencies, Lahore, 1929

<sup>19</sup> Azad, A K, Address to Indian National Congress, Ramgarh, 1940 *Khutbat-e-Azad* pp. 297-298

aspect of their lives was affected by mutual give and take — language, poetry, etiquette, manners, tastes, clothing, custom, and daily life. He rightly insists:

This common heritage is the rich possession of our united nationality. We cannot surrender this wealth in order to return to the age which preceded this life partnership. If there are among us Hindu minds which desire to revive the Hindu ways existing a thousand years ago, then they should know that they are seeking a dream which will never be fulfilled. In the same way if there exist Muslim minds which want to revivify the culture and social life which a thousand years ago they brought from Iran and Central Asia, then I tell them that the sooner they awake from this dream the better, because this notion is wholly unnatural and such thoughts cannot grow in the soil of reality.<sup>20</sup>

He was never tired of saying that for the sake of India's freedom, for the sake of fulfilling the highest ideals of duty based on truth and right, it was necessary for the Hindus and Muslims to become one and united. In fact he went so far in his emphasis on unity as to assert.

If an angel was to descend from beyond the clouds in the heavens and was to stand on the top of the Qutab Minar of Delhi and proclaim that India could attain Independence (*swaraj*) in twenty-four hours, provided she abandons Hindu-Muslim unity, I will surrender the demand for *swaraj*, but I will not give up unity, for if there is delay in gaining *swaraj* the loss will be that of India only, but if our unity is destroyed then it will be the loss of the entire human race.<sup>21</sup>

For achieving Hindu-Muslim unity he appealed to both communities, but laid a special charge on the Muslims for cultivating a consciousness of nationalism and playing a leading role in the struggle for freedom. He was prepared for every sacrifice to rid the country of the British rule. He said:

A Muslim will abandon the cities in which he dwells, will move into the forests, will make peace with serpents and scorpions, but he will not make peace with the British Government.<sup>22</sup>

The political creed of Azad was freedom, unity, secularism, and democracy. He adopted with enthusiasm the method and programme of non-violent non-cooperation, although he did not make it a religious principle. His opinion on the plan for Pakistan was

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 299

<sup>21</sup> Dr. M. U. Qadiri, "Contribution of Azad in the Renaissance of Indian Culture" Published in *Anwar-e-Abul Kalam Azad*, Ali Jawwad Zaidi, ed., Srinagar, 1959

<sup>22</sup> Malihabadi, op. cit., pp. 138-139



After considering all aspects of the scheme I have reached the conclusion that, taken as a whole, it is not only harmful for India alone, but is specially injurious for the Muslims. The truth is that it will not solve as many problems as it will create...The scheme cannot, by any means, either benefit the Muslims or remove their doubts and fears.<sup>23</sup>

Maulana Azad acknowledged the fusion of Indo-Islamic arts, namely, music, painting, architecture and dress,

Most of the Mughal emperors were deeply interested in art. They were both patrons and critics, encouraging talent, and guiding skills. They invited to their courts great masters of painting from Central Asia and Persia. They gathered the competent practitioners of the art of India. The two worked together and the one was influenced by the other. The result was a style of wondrous beauty.<sup>24</sup>

In the area of fine arts, the Muslims made a significant contribution. They had something to teach and something to learn in art and architecture, and from this fusion developed a distinct Indo-Iranian technique. This was the beginning of the contact between the Hindu and the Muslim styles. The Indo-Iranian architecture, which the kingdoms of Bengal, Jaunpur, Mandu, and Ahmedabad developed, was a harmony of the Hindu and the Muslim traditions.

Music is another field to which the Hindu and the Muslim musicians contributed generously. They realized that, like poetry, music, too, elevates emotion to the ecstatic state necessary for union with God. Both the *Chishtiya* and *Qadria* fraternities sanctioned *Sama* musical rhythms that enhanced the effect of poetry. They enabled the devotee to plunge himself in a state of trance called *Haal*.

Amir Khusro mastered the Persian musical system called *Naqsh*. Persian poetry was sung to twelve tunes. Each had two shades, resulting in twenty-four *ragas*. Each *raga* was to be sung at a particular hour of the twenty-four hours of night and day. It goes to the credit of Amir Khusro that he invented new *ragas* by combining Persian and Indian music. Several of these *ragas* have disappeared, but many still remain, a delight to musicians, namely *Yeman*, *Zilf*, *Sarparda*, and *Gazgiri*. He also invented musical forms such as *Sawani*, *Farodast*, *Pashto*, and *Qawwali*.<sup>25</sup>

This climate was conducive to kings and nobles to patronizing music and enriching it with new forms and content. The name of Sultan Hussain Sharqi, a ruler of Jaunpur, was second only to that of Amir Khusro. It

<sup>23</sup> A J.Zaidi, "Azad The Architect of Unity and Freedom" Published in *Anwar-i-Abul Kalam Azad* Srinagar, 1959

<sup>24</sup> *Ghubar-i-Khatir*

<sup>25</sup> Dr M U.Qadiri, op cit

became fashionable for royalty and nobility to instruct their sons in music, as a necessary part of education. Everywhere there were saints and Sufis, who were experts in music and worked for its advancement. Names like Sheikh Malli Khan Gujarati, Sheikh Alauddin and Sheikh Jamal Sahib are well known. Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia himself was a great critic of music.

Despite the handicap of his family background, Maulana Azad learnt to play the *Sitar* when he was very very young. He writes in *Ghubai-i-Khatir* that during his short stay at Agra he would go to the Taj Mahal on moonlit nights and play *the Sitar* for hours.

Maulana Azad belonged to that select group of high minded Indians who did not seek prominence and popularity but were sought out by others and had leadership thrust upon them. Azad was a self-made and self-educated man, who had grown up among the traditional atmosphere of an old style theological family but who worked shoulder to shoulder with the most advanced and modern Indian leaders and made a rich contribution to the emergence of a secular democratic India.

# Views on Science and Technology

*A. Rahman*

## A Personal Preface

The invitation to write on Maulana Azad floods my mind with many memories. Because of my family's close association with him in various fields, such as literary and theological studies and the national movement, from my very childhood, I had opportunities to meet and learn from him. Of the many such occasions a few are worth recounting, before I take up an appraisal of his outlook on science and technology.

As a student of Jamia Millia Islamia School, I was asked to present to Gandhiji, on the annual day of the Jamia, a piece of cloth woven by me, along with the produce from the school vegetable garden, which each student was expected to cultivate. After the function was over, there was a discussion among Gandhiji, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Maulana Azad and a few other leaders, where my grandfather, Maulana Sharfuddin "Yaas" Tonki, was present, and with him was I. Part of the conversation is etched in the mind. Gandhiji asked Maulana: "How can we stop this flood?" Maulana replied, "Mahatmaji, we cannot stop the flood, but can only change its direction."

Another incident occurred either in 1941 or early 1942, when I was a student in the Aligarh Muslim University. Some Aligarh students had called Maulana a "showboy" and hurled shoes at him at the railway station when he was passing through. I boarded the train and went to his compartment and apologized on behalf of students, saying, "They know not what they are doing." His comment was characteristic of him: "Whether you garland me or throw shoes at me, I will say what I have to say."

This is what he did throughout his life; he always acted upon what he considered right and always said what he thought was the truth. He always suffered at the hands of those who chose soft options on the basis of expediency.

The third incident which is worth recounting took place in Hyderabad.

I was working at the Central Laboratories for Scientific and Industrial Research, (now the Regional Research Laboratory) Dr S Hussain Zaheer, then Director of the Laboratory, had invited Panditji as well as Maulana. I was asked by Dr. Zaheer to conduct them round the laboratories and explain the work being done. At the end of the tour all the scientists gathered to listen to the two leaders I requested Panditji to say a few words. After Panditji had spoken, I requested Maulana to say a few words. Maulana replied: "Panditji has already said whatever had to be said." But when pressed further he said to the gathered scientists of the laboratory in chaste Urdu: "The work which you are doing is important and you should know that we realize its importance." This again was characteristic of him, his choice of words as well as brevity of expression.

The last incident is very personal. I was to appear at the end of 1956 for an interview for the post of Assistant Director at the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee. In those days, the Vice-President of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research used to preside over the meetings of selection committees. I communicated a request to Maulana Azad through an intermediary, that I would be most grateful if he chose not to preside, since, if I were to be selected, there would be a feeling that I was selected because of him, and if I was not, I would lay the blame on him. Maulana very graciously chose not to preside over the meeting. The committee selected me. After I had received the appointment letter, Maulana's secretary, Ajmal Khan, passed me a message from him asking whether I would call on him, since I had established myself as a scientist on my own. The day when I came to Delhi from Roorkee with the idea of seeking an appointment, I learnt of his passing away. It is to this day my regret that I did not come to Delhi earlier and have an audience with him.

### Maulana's Views

Now to an examination of Maulana Azad's views on science and technology. His life-span covered three phases in the development of science and technology. (i) the colonial phase, (ii) the logical positivist phase, and (iii) the phase of scientific and technological euphoria.

The first phase represented the emergence of industrial capitalism and the growth of science and technology fed by the ruthless exploitation by the European nations of the natural resources and the people of Asian, African and American countries.<sup>1</sup> Science was projected as a European phenomenon<sup>2</sup> and was patronizingly imposed on India in opposition to traditional learning.<sup>3</sup> Azad, who was steeped in medieval learning and

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<sup>1</sup> E J Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, London, Penguin

<sup>2</sup> A Rahman, *Intellectual Colonization, Science and Technology in East West Relations*, New Delhi, Vikas, 1986

<sup>3</sup> J D Bernal, *Social Functions of Science*, London George Routledge and Sons, 1938 p 208

culture of the Islamic world, looked at this attitude with no small degree of revulsion. The enquiring and analytical mind which he possessed looked at the decline of the Islamic world and of India and came to its own conclusions, which were reflected in his various addresses as Education Minister of free India.

The second phase, which began with the turn of the century and continued until the beginning of the Second World War, was marked by a logical positivist outlook towards science. Anything which could not be explained within the framework of the then existing knowledge, was considered non-scientific and irrational. It was felt that as science developed, it would solve all problems on a rational basis. Human misery, war and other inequalities and irrationalities would disappear. It was also felt that as technology advanced, new industries would provide employment and the new products usher in a new era of plenty, making disparities a thing of the past.

This phase of science in India was also a period of the emergence of the national movement for freedom. During this period there were also some other developments. The reaction against colonialism resulted in a certain degree of revivalism, and a tendency to go to the past for the solution of current problems. There was a certain reaction against Westernization and against science itself, as it was considered materialistic and against the spiritual and religious traditions of our country. There was also revival of indigenous arts and crafts and the production of indigenous goods to meet the needs of people. This came to be associated with the Gandhian tradition, though Gandhiji himself had an open mind and an experimentalist outlook, ready to adopt new knowledge and put it to practical use.

The period also witnessed the creation of the infrastructure of science, with the opening of several educational and research institutions. These centres were initially established and run by British teachers and scientists, but gradually Indians took them over. Several Indians with nationalist aspirations carried out research on the frontiers of science and also created industries.<sup>4</sup> Some basic industries, like iron and steel, and some consumer industries like textiles and medicines came up.

The third feature of this period was the emergence of a socialist vision which wanted to promote science and technology as the basis of a planned society which would end economic backwardness, achieve equitable redistribution of resources and put an end to superstition.

The last phase began with the end of the Second World War and the political liberation of India. In the world at large, there was a vast expansion of science, with marked achievements in new fields like nuclear science, radar and antibiotics. A certain euphoria was attached to science and its role

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<sup>4</sup> A. Rahman Keynote Address to Seminar on Social Perspective of Generation and Utilisation of Indigenous Technology, Hyderabad, 1987

in bringing about socio-economic changes. In India, under the leadership of Nehru, the development of science and technology became a major instrument of policy

Azad became Minister of Education and Science. What were the views of this savant, who was steeped in medieval learning? What role did he play in furthering the development of science and the promotion of technology?

In the last forty years there has been considerable questioning all over the world about the nature and role of science and technology. It is said that they have exacerbated inequality, within nations as well as between nations.<sup>5</sup> They have been castigated as the instruments of a new intellectual colonization and domination. The view has also been advanced that science ignores the deeper ethical and spiritual needs of human beings.<sup>6</sup> In fact, there has been a new spurt in religious movements and cults which promise the satisfaction of aspirations which cannot be met by science. Many scientists, including Nobel Prize winners, are going back to religion.

The fearsome advances of military technology and the lethal power of weapons have encouraged the growth of peace movements. There is a new awareness of the harmful effects of industries, old and new, on the environment. The recognition of the possibilities of resources being exhausted has led to an emphasis on renewable resources and the recycling of materials. A strong revulsion has developed against the alienating and dehumanizing effects of technological development and there is a search for alternative systems.<sup>7</sup>

It might be worthwhile to ask ourselves if Maulana Azad had any insights into such issues.

Azad was one of the few leaders of the freedom movement who, steeped in medieval scholarship and classical learning, transcending the boundaries of different classical languages and religion, knew both the good points and the limitations of the national heritage. He stood for a humanistic outlook. He felt that without such an outlook there was no possibility of reaching the highest level of human dignity and achievement. He castigated any kind of narrow outlook, whether expressed as a cultural tradition, as national chauvinism, or religious orthodoxy. His remarks concerning the last are of special relevance when fundamentalism and religious fanaticism have taken hold of the minds of people. As he said, "Some Indian institutions which sought to preserve our traditional

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<sup>5</sup> *Science and the Factors of Inequality*. Charles Moraze, Unesco, 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Marcuse and Roszack provided a series of critical reactions to science. In India, Dr S Radhakrishnan had brought it out earlier.

<sup>7</sup> In this context, the experiments on living upon locally available resources and low energy systems are worth mentioning.

values, since they shut their doors against the influence of the modern age, were more relics of the past than institutions with a living message.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, he commended the lofty humanism of Rabindranath Tagore “Which rose above all sectarian and communal limitations,” with the whole world becoming his home. Azad approves of Tagore’s view that this sense of kinship with the whole world was the essence of Indian culture.<sup>9</sup> Azad was never tired of talking about the need to widen one’s horizons and to overcome narrowness and superstition. He castigates those who, in the name of religion or national heritage, perpetuate outmoded beliefs and ideas. He remarked, “There is no greater hindrance (to development) than narrow mindedness. No disease is so dangerous for a healthy growth of national life than narrow-mindedness. Like an actor it masquerades in disguise. In the domain of religion it appears in the form of blind faith and wants to deceive us in the name of orthodoxy. In politics it wants to overpower us in the guise of nationalism.”<sup>10</sup> Azad was a champion of the “cultivation of a spirit of tolerance”, which he described as the message of the Indian civilization.<sup>11</sup> He never hesitated to analyse or comment on issues which were controversial and hotly debated. Although he had suffered considerably at the hands of the British, he was not blind to some of the progressive aspects of British rule in India. Discussing the educational system introduced by the British, he wrote that though the purpose was to create in India men who in training, outlook, and loyalties would be devoted to the interests of Great Britain, the system opened a new world of science and modern technology. “It inculcated a progressive spirit and brought Indian educational standards in line with the standards obtaining elsewhere.” It was responsible for creating “a national spirit and growth of modern progressive outlook.”<sup>12</sup>

Azad also praised the work of Christian missionaries in promoting modern education and in conducting scientific research into Indian traditions and in writing grammars and developing the languages of India.<sup>13</sup> Azad emphasized the role of scientific knowledge in the secularization of civic and national life. In sharp contrast to the belief prevalent among religious leaders that society was ordained by God, and should be guided by religious beliefs and codes, Azad stressed the secular nature of society. He laid stress on the role of sociological studies. He called them, “A branch of theoretical knowledge which tries to establish the laws of social interactions, relations and development.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad 1947-1955* Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, January, 1950, p 163

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p 169

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p 20

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p 20

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p 1

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 4

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p 38



He supported every movement which would broaden people's minds. He envisaged a special role for broadcasting in this regard. He said of radio, "This may be utilized for broadening the mind of the masses and opening up a new world of knowledge to them"<sup>15</sup>

He disapproved of anti-British or anti-English zealots who felt that "True nationalists should have no tinge of modern civilization"<sup>16</sup> At the same time, he was highly critical of the habit of slavish imitation. "Dazzled by the achievements of the West it has at times encouraged a tendency to look down upon our national heritage. This could not lead to the development of a national mind."<sup>17</sup> To him the development of a national mind based on social consciousness, civic understanding, and scientific knowledge was an important necessity. As regards the traditional debate over religion and materialism, he observed, "We are surrounded by over-religiosity. Our present difficulties, unlike those of Europe, are not the creation of materialist zealots but of religious fanatics."<sup>18</sup>

### Views on the Philosophy of Science

Azad had a remarkable understanding of the philosophy of science, its evolution, its contemporary social role and future possibilities. In discussing these he constantly reminded his listeners and readers of the Indian tradition.

Science, in his view, had made "Continuous and steady progress in wresting from Nature some of her greatest secrets. Veil after veil has been torn asunder from the hidden face of Nature and secrets which were still unknown are yielding to his quest"<sup>19</sup>

But this progress had not led man to understand, "What man is, whence he comes and whither he goes." In this context he contrasts the Western view, as it originated in Greece, with the ideas developed in India. Greek ideas, according to him, represented what could be described as an externalist point of view, which emphasized what a man did rather than what he was. In ancient India, by contrast, the emphasis was on the identity of man. In the modern age, "A materialistic and scientific temper became the pervasive outlook of the West." Through Darwin, man became an animal. Through Freud, his mental outlook retained the vestiges of his animal origin. Marx and Marxist studies made his mentality a product of the environment.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, Vedanta in India and Sufism in Islamic culture, emphasized the intrinsic spirituality of man. Man had God's

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid , p 8

<sup>16</sup> Ibid , p 20

<sup>17</sup> Ibid , p 11-2

<sup>18</sup> Ibid , p 25

<sup>19</sup> Ibid , p 178

<sup>20</sup> Ibid , p 181

attributes. Everything was encompassed in man. There was no limit to the heights which he could attain in both knowledge and power.<sup>21</sup>

While emphasizing the spirituality of the Indian concepts, Azad was also aware of the ethos it had created in Indian society. By suggesting that whatever happened was God's will and man could not fight against it, a fatalistic attitude had been engendered, which, on the one hand, led Indians to a high degree of spiritual attainments, and, on the other, had become an impediment to further progress.

Azad pointed out that in the East we had laid a disproportionate emphasis on individual salvation, and knowledge was sought as a means of individual redemption. This, by implication, had led to a high degree of individualism and a lack of social consciousness which acted as a brake on social progress. The West, on the contrary, had laid great emphasis on the need for social progress, which had reduced the significance of the individual and created totalitarian systems. In Azad's words:

In the Eastern concept, man as an emanation of God, shares His infinite attribute and is capable of achieving mastery over the entire creation. In the Western concept, man is, no doubt, an animal but there is no limit to the progress that he can achieve in the material field. His scientific achievements are a visible proof of his superiority and his domination over the rest of the creation, sea and earth. We may, therefore, say that the Western practice has substantiated the claim which Eastern theory has made in respect of man. Since, however, the Western concept has not emphasized the spiritual origin of man, his triumphs in the scientific field have themselves become a source of danger to his survival. If, therefore, the achievement of Western science can be utilized in the Eastern spirit of man's affinity with God, science would become an instrument not of destruction but of the establishment of human prosperity, peace and progress.<sup>22</sup>

He goes on to say:

Science in itself is neutral. Its discoveries can be used equally to heal and to kill. It depends upon the outlook and mentality of the user whether science will be used to create a new heaven on earth or to destroy the world in a common conflagration. If we think of man as only a progressive animal, there is nothing to prevent his using science to further interests based on the passions he shares in common with animals. If, however,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid , p 184

<sup>22</sup> Ibid , p 187 (Azad's views are similar to those of Dr S Radhakrishnan in this respect )

we think of him as an emanation of God, he can use science only for the furtherance of God's purposes, that is, the achievement of peace on earth and the good of all men <sup>23</sup>

While admitting the significant contributions of science, Azad asked his countrymen to utilize the knowledge for social progress. He also warned them of the evil consequences of an unwise use of scientific discoveries and technological developments.

Since the beginning of the century, technological and scientific developments have tended to make war and peace coextensive with the whole world. Today, the progress of science has created conditions where all legitimate demands of man can be satisfied. We can now live in an economy of plenty rather than one of want. Secrets of nature have been revealed, one after another, and these have made available to man the immense wealth of her hidden resources. The tragedy of the situation, however, is that this increase of knowledge and mastery over nature are being used not so much for the constructive purposes of society as to enhance man's power of destruction. The energy of the atom has been unlocked and this can bring comfort and plenty within the reach of all. We are, however, concentrating on the use of atomic energy mainly to create terrible engines of destruction. Wireless has brought all mankind nearer one another, but instead of using it to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among men, we are using it as an aid to the propagation of hatred and discord. Aeroplanes are being used primarily to develop our offensive in aerial warfare. Greater knowledge of germs and bacteria promises mastery over disease and suffering, but such knowledge is often being sought to develop their use as weapons in bacteriological war. Not that these discoveries have no beneficent use, but such use seems subsidiary to the main purpose of employing them as weapons for the destruction of humanity <sup>24</sup>

Azad's concern was to use science for human welfare. Speaking on the possible role of Unesco in this task, he pointed out that Unesco, in its functioning, seemed to be inadequately appreciative of the problems of what he called the East (what we now term as developing countries). He criticized Unesco for excessive concentration on European organizations and on its own headquarters. He advocated a decentralization of its activities.<sup>25</sup> He was keen that Unesco should work for the peaceful use of atomic energy. He proposed a diversion of 1 percent of the budget

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid , p 185

<sup>24</sup> Ibid , p 215

<sup>25</sup> Ibid , pp 276-284

spent on armaments to Unesco's activities<sup>26</sup> According to him the greatest task was to challenge the perpetrators of cruelty The soul of this was Gandhiji's concept of non-violence and a political programme of action based on it<sup>27</sup>

### National Scientific Planning

Let us now look at Azad's ideas on the role of science in national development The direction he gave to the development of scientific infrastructure and his role as Minister of Education and Vice-President of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research deserve better appreciation

Azad enjoyed the respect of scientists There was a close understanding between him and Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar They had met in Calcutta before Independence, and this had led to a lasting friendship Bhatnagar's knowledge of Urdu and Urdu poetry was a factor which facilitated the relationship Azad could exchange his ideas with Bhatnagar in a language of which he was a master

This understanding and friendship had considerable influence on the development of the CSIR, its organizational structure and its expansion in the early period. Not much has been written about it. Nehru had the overall responsibility for the CSIR and provided it direction. But, as Vice-President, it was Azad who dealt with the day-to-day matters of CSIR, as well as its long-term plans Paying a tribute to Nehru, he said.

You undertook the direct responsibility for the Department of Scientific Research and all its work was done under your personal guidance. The foundations you have laid in these four years will, I am sure, lead to the erection of one of the most valuable monuments of our national endeavour<sup>28</sup>

Of Bhatnagar, Azad said, "The Director of the Council has proved that an eminent scientist can fill the role of an administrator with equal distinction."<sup>29</sup> Azad's special achievement was to bring in specialists as Secretaries to the Government in Education and in Science—a trend which was later reversed. On the organizational structure and status of CSIR, he said.

One reason for its splendid success is that the Council is an autonomous body with its own budget and free from the formalities and red tape which slow down the administrative machinery of the Government Even the Minister in charge, who supervises the activities of the Council, does so not as a Minister but as an office-bearer of the council There is, thus,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid , pp 276-284

<sup>27</sup> Malik Ram ed , *Khutbat-e-Azad*,, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi

<sup>28</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad 1947-1955*, p 210

<sup>29</sup> Ibid , p 241

no outside interference with the activities of the Council. To a large measure the success of the Council is due to this fact.<sup>30</sup> On another occasion he said:

There was in our educational and scientific institutions a gap whose existence hampered the growth and development of our national industries. The establishment of eleven (industrial) laboratories is, therefore, a step of the greatest importance for the future progress of the country. And I can say with confidence that of the diverse nation-building activities undertaken after the attainment of Independence, it will rank among the most important.<sup>31</sup>

### His Religion

Azad's Islam was steeped in humanity and reflected a deep understanding not only of its theology but of its social and cultural evolution in different countries, in different periods. He sought to interpret both aspects. He urged his co-religionists to overcome their narrowness and fanaticism, come out of the shackles of medievalism and play an effective role in contemporary society. However, he was against the practice of using the latest scientific discoveries in explaining Quranic verses. He criticized "The Egyptian scholar, Tantawi Jouhari, who had freely drawn upon modern research in explaining Quranic verses."<sup>32</sup>

According to Nadwi, Azad was expressing his opinion about the desirability of taking advantage of new researches and discoveries in the exegesis of the Quran. His view was that one should be extremely cautious in citing new discoveries in explaining Quranic verses, for nobody could be sure if any research, acceptable today, would continue to be accepted tomorrow.<sup>33</sup>

In his own commentary on the Quran, he refrains from doing so. However, in explaining the content of Quranic verses he takes into account linguistic features, the context in which a specific verse was revealed and the socio-historical and cultural features.<sup>34</sup>

Maulana regarded science and religious faith as belonging to two different compartments of the intellectual and emotional experience of man. If there was any link between them, it lay deep in the subconscious. It might be reflected, if at all, in the commitment to a value system. His Islam was, as he described it, beyond self-made boundaries and limitations. It represented the deeply felt urges of man to understand himself and others around him. In talking of the human spirit he realized its supremacy over instruments and artefacts. As regards the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pp 240-41

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p 210

<sup>32</sup> Abul Hasan Nadwi, "Ali Mian", in *Azad Academy Journal*, 1988

<sup>33</sup> *Tafsir-ul-Quran*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi

<sup>34</sup> *Khutbat-e-Azad* loc cit

contemporary ethos, he specifically pointed out some of its basic limitations. According to him, we had confused the means with the ends, the path with the objectives. We laid stress on the instrument, forgetting the man who wielded the instrument. If the man was limited, what use would a fine instrument be?<sup>35</sup>

He gave expression to his thoughts in moving words, when paying tribute to the mountaineers who had conquered the Everest for the first time:

The human spirit has faced in many fields Nature's most tremendous challenges. The history of science is one long story of such struggles. But the challenge which these friends faced 29,002 feet above us was in many respects unique. In other fields, man's endeavour has been greatly aided by human ingenuity and by the instruments of science; these instruments have often decided the fate of the combat. But in the battle waged by these friends, ingenuity and mechanical aids were only of limited help.....Here, where Nature assumes its most terrific aspect and the elements are most ruthlessly at war, the human body and mind, adapted to the exigencies of an environment 29,000 feet below, feel powerless and almost cease to respond. In such a battle, weapons are of little avail. Only invincible courage and undaunted will-power can help a man to succeed.

How can one assess a man such as Maulana Azad?

In a moving tribute on his passing away, his comrade in arms, Jawaharlal Nehru, said. "It was the strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness and deep learning and toleration, with the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was."<sup>36</sup>

Recalling the impressions formed over the years through personal contact, and re-reading his writings after a lapse of decades, one begins to ask oneself, what was he?

A scholar who had crossed the boundaries of different cultures, and while, rooted in the past, who wished to create a new order based on humanism, tolerance and non-violence;

A classicist who knew many languages, but was not bound by traditional interpretations and sought to provide new meaning in the light of new knowledge;

A deeply religious person, a devout Muslim, who fought against narrow-mindedness and fanaticism, who appreciated the essence of other religions and respected them in the true spirit of humanism, and who did not think

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<sup>35</sup> *Speeches of Maulana Azad, 1947-1955*, p. 252

<sup>36</sup> Nehru's speech in Parliament paying tribute to Azad

that truth was a monopoly of any religion,

An Indian who integrated in himself the values of Islamic and Indian cultures and valued both, and strove for the future development of Indian culture by incorporating the knowledge and values of modern industrial culture;

A nationalist who knew of the injustices and exploitation perpetrated by the British, but was ready to acknowledge what they had contributed to Indian education, knowledge, society and culture,

A true patriot who abhorred narrowness, pettiness and chauvinism and rejected ossified traditions, rituals and degenerate customs,

An Indian who aimed and worked for human equality, peace and non-violence, and

A scholar who was an aesthete, full of grace

Every one of Maulana Azad's speeches and writings, every one of his actions in daily life, reflected the unique cultural, intellectual and spiritual amalgam that he was



# Theological Basis of Politics

*Malik Ram*

The forefathers of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, scion of an ancient religious family, were quite prominent during the Mughal regime in India. History has recorded the career of one of his ancestors at the court of Akbar the Great (1556-1605). He had the moral courage to oppose Akbar's extravagant claims and uncalled for intrusion into the domain of religion. Azad's father, Maulana Khairuddin, being dissatisfied with Indian conditions, had migrated to Arabia and settled down in Mecca. He married into a leading religious family of Medina. Out of this wedlock were born five children - three daughters and two sons. Azad was the youngest of the progeny, born in 1888 at Mecca.

In 1898, his father met with an accident and broke his leg. As no satisfactory medical aid was available at Mecca, he decided to come to India for treatment. The whole family came with him. He had intended to return to Hedjaz after treatment, but his friends and followers in Bombay and Calcutta did not agree. They prevailed upon him to abandon the idea of going back and insisted on his settling down in India, permanently. Azad's education had already begun in Mecca, and now arrangements were made for the continuation of his studies in Calcutta. Special teachers, well-versed in various branches of theological lore were engaged to train him in these fields of knowledge. Thus, his entire education was aimed at making him a religious divine. Throughout, the medium of instruction was Arabic and Persian. He had completed his education by 1903 when he was hardly fifteen. In the orthodox family of which he was a member, English was taboo, and its teaching or study was considered an act of impiety amounting to apostasy (*Kufr*), being the language of infidels. He had, therefore, not studied any English nor any arrangements were made by his father for its study. Later on, when he realized that without the knowledge of English he could not know what was happening in the West, he made private arrangements to learn the language, and, with diligence and perseverance, acquired sufficient command over the

language to enable him to study English books on various subjects. Personally, he never spoke English and needed an interpreter to carry on conversation with English speaking friends and visitors.

Azad was essentially a literary man. His preference was for journalism and writing. Politics was, probably, the last field which he could have thought of entering. Circumstances, however, conspired to attract him to politics and, gradually, he became so immersed in the contemporary political whirlwind that towards the later part of his life he could hardly get out of it and writing became a thing of the past.

In July 1912, he started publishing his famous weekly *Al-Hilal* from Calcutta. He had dabbled in journalism since 1899, when he was hardly eleven or twelve years of age. In 1903, he had started publishing a monthly magazine, *Lisan-ul-Sidq* by name, which made its mark and brought him prominence and fame among the literary circles of the country. But *Al-Hilal* was entirely a new venture. It was meant to serve as a *mission* (*da'awat*) to invite people back to the righteous path which they had forgotten or forsaken in their extra-zealous religious activities. Its emphasis was, naturally, on religion and that too particularly on Islam. Its audience were, no doubt, Muslims at large, but in fact, content, and argument, it addressed itself to the Muslim religious community, in particular those who wielded an all-powerful influence over the masses.

Azad pointed out to them that Muslims had a two-fold responsibility towards society which had been imposed upon them by their religion. The Quran has repeatedly enjoined them to propagate truth and prohibit people from committing wrong and evil deeds. Very often both these injunctions have been coupled with regular obligatory prayers (9-71), signifying not only their essentiality but also emphasizing that without performing this duty, even their prayers may not be of much avail. At one place those that turn to God in repentance, serve Him, wander in devotion to the cause of Allah, bow down and prostrate, are declared as competent to enjoin good and forbid evil (9-12). Many quotations to this effect are available in the Quran. Take only one example<sup>1</sup>

Verily Man  
Is in loss  
Except such as have Faith  
And do righteous deeds  
And join together  
In the mutual teaching  
Of Truth and of  
Patience and Constancy. (103:2-3)

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All translations of the Quranic Arabic text are by A. Yusuf Ali, Shaikh Moham-mad Ashraf, Lahore, 1979.

Maulana Azad explains that four duties had been enjoined upon the Muslims. 1 Faith This is the first imperative, Islam expects from all believers that they should have implicit and complete faith in God and His revelation 2 Correct and appropriate action, because belief and faith without being translated into right action has no meaning. 3. Dissemination of truth, because so long as one has not been able to convince others of the correctness of his belief and action, he will not be able to achieve his objective 4. Tolerance and resistance to all impediments that may hinder in the performance of one's duty Unless one cultivates these four faculties, one cannot achieve one's goal One must have complete faith in the correctness of what one believes in and must act according to the rules laid down by that belief One must propagate one's faith and correctness of one's action to the whole world. And, lastly, one must be prepared to face whatever resistance or hurdle is placed in one's way by opponents. As long as one has the objective in sight and has carved one's way accordingly, no power on earth can stop an individual from achieving his goal

He reinforces this thesis by another verse of the Quran

Let there arise out of you  
A band of people  
Inviting to all that is good  
Enjoining what is right  
And forbidding what is wrong  
They are the ones  
To attain felicity (3 104)

This is, in fact, the anchor-sheet of all religious teachings. One must endeavour to spread righteousness and tell people what is right. The other side of the coin is to stop people from acting wrongly and tell them what is wrong For Azad, this was a fundamental principle of Islam. All the woes and ills of the Muslims had started from the day when they ignored this behest of their religion He, therefore, took it upon himself to proclaim what, in his opinion, was the right path for people to follow, and what was wrong so that people could shun it.

He chose two different fields for both these principles. On the positive side he preached Jihad, i.e., full effort to advance the cause of righteousness, and on the negative side he emphasized non-cooperation with the foreign rulers Ever since the days of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the Muslims had been told that their salvation lay in co-operation with the British rulers and in abjuring the principle of Jihad. Sir Syed had in mind the events and consequences of the 1857 movement when he laid down the principles of co-operation with the British. He had come to the conclusion that the Muslims of India had committed a fatal mistake

by opposing and fighting against the British Government during the 1857 Mutiny. In his opinion the Muslims had to suffer loss of life and property because of this initial mistake, and, in order to make amends he now wanted them to keep away from all movements that might result in confrontation with the Government. It was with that end in view that Sir Syed invited the Muslims to study the English language and the English way of life. When the Indian National Congress was established in 1885, he opposed it. He advised the Muslims of India not to join the movement. To a great extent he succeeded in his objective. Except for a handful of educated Muslims of Bombay and Calcutta, the community at large kept aloof from the Indian National Congress. In fact, the boycott of Indian National Congress and all anti-Government movements remained an article of faith with the Muslims, until Azad raised his voice against it. He told the Muslims, that by keeping quiet in the face of wrongs that were being perpetrated by the foreign rulers, and, consequently, for fear of persecution, not joining the struggle to get rid of it, they were committing a sin and disobeying the principles and behests of Islam. Every week *Al-Hilal* brought this message to its readers. It developed a large readership, and people began thinking that whatever had, so far, been shown to them by Sir Syed and his coterie was not the correct path.

His second plank was Jihad. Jihad, in Arabic has several connotations, one of which is armed struggle against an enemy. In common parlance it means supreme effort. But Azad used it to mean armed revolt. Ever since the 1857 struggle, the British rulers were very sensitive about Jihad since this had formed the basis of a religious *Fatwah*, promulgated by several Muslim divines, that to fight the British, who were dubbed as infidels (Kafirs) was the duty of every Muslim. Azad quoted the Quran, "Sovereignty belongs to no one else except God" (12:40). Azad interpreted it in this way that if sovereignty was that of God only, how could a believer bow down his head and obey the orders of any one else? It, therefore, follows that to agree to remain under the sovereignty of the British was un-Islamic. It was the duty of every Muslim to struggle against this state of affairs and throw away the yoke of foreign rule.

At this time, the European powers were fighting the Ottoman Empire on two fronts — in Balkans and in Tripoli, North Africa. *Al-Hilal* made special arrangements to publish, every week, despatches from both these battle-fields. Pictures of Turkish generals, their biographies and other relevant material became a common feature of *Al-Hilal*. This was done to, indirectly, buttress his arguments that Jihad was the duty of every Muslim. Many Muslim religious leaders admitted that it were the writings of Azad in *Al-Hilal* that reminded them of their duties about this essential tenet of Islam which they had long forgotten.

Some people raised the objection that the remedy prescribed by Azad to get rid of the British rule was no permanent solution to the problem.

Even if the struggle against the British was successful, the plight of Muslims would be no better. They would have to transfer their loyalty from the British to the Hindu majority who would eventually have sway over the country. How could this be tolerated if Jihad against a foreign rule was a fundamental principle of Islam? Azad again referred his critics to the Quran:

Allah forbids you not,  
 With regard to those who  
 Fight you not for (your) Faith  
 Nor drive you out  
 Of your homes  
 From dealing kindly and justly  
 With them for Allah loveth  
 Those who are just  
 Allah only forbids you  
 With regard to those who  
 Fight you for (your) Faith  
 And drive you out  
 Of your homes, and support  
 (Others) in driving you out,  
 From turning to them  
 (For friendship and protection)  
 It is such as turn to them  
 (In these circumstances)  
 That do wrong. (60.8-9)

Azad said that the British had deprived the Muslims of their liberty not only in India but in other parts of the world as well. They had compelled them to flee their homes and hearths. It was, therefore, not possible for Muslims to befriend the British. On the other hand the majority of Hindus in India had done no such thing. They had all along stood by them, sympathized with them in their hour of need, and helped them whenever they needed it. It was their duty, therefore, to live in friendship with the Hindus and co-operate with them in all their efforts. Otherwise, they will be committing a sin according to these verses of the Quran.

The First World War started in August 1914. In this war, Turkey had sided with Germany against the Allies. The British government was naturally anxious to enlist the support of Indian people including the Muslims against their German enemy. In other words, they wanted the Indian army to fight against Germany and Turkey. Turkey at that time was the seat of the Khilafat which was the focus of allegiance for the entire

Muslim world The Muslims of India were no exception to this state of affairs. Every week during their Friday prayer they proclaimed their obedience to the Khalifa who was the Sultan of Turkey. When the British Government asked the Indian Muslims to enlist in the army which would be despatched to the European and African battlefields to fight against Germany and Turkey, the Muslim community hesitated. Their genuine reservations were quite obvious. On the one hand, they recognized the Sultan of Turkey as their religious head (Khalifa), and on the other hand they were asked to take up arms against him on behalf of non-believers (Kafirs). This was absolutely a contradictory condition.

They were afraid of another consequence as well. The Governments of Christian Europe had not forgotten their ignominious defeat during the Crusades. They were still smarting from the insult, and wanted to take revenge from the Muslim world, of which Turkey was the acknowledged head. The Indian Muslims, therefore, put forward a condition for their assistance. In case the Allies were victorious in the War and Germany was defeated, no harm would come to Turkey, and no adverse action would be taken against the institution of Khilafat. During its initial stage, the war was going against the Allies and they were in a tight corner. The British were in dire need of help from the Indian Muslims, who were an important section of the Indian army. Therefore they readily agreed to the conditions put forward by the Muslim leaders of India and pledged that in case of their victory no harm would befall Turkey and the institution of Khilafat.

The British, however, forgot all their promises and pledges when Germany was defeated and representatives of all warring nations assembled at Versailles to draw up the Treaty of Peace. Germany and Turkey being the defeated powers had to pay heavily for taking up arms against the Allies. The Ottoman Empire was dismembered. Most of its territories were either granted independence or given in mandate to various European powers. This was contrary to all the solemn pledges given by the British to the Indian Muslims. The British advanced the excuse that this was the considered decision of the Allied powers and they were helpless. This could hardly satisfy the Muslims. Accordingly, in 1920, the Majlis-i-Khilafat was founded with the primary object of exerting pressure on the Allied powers to spare the Ottoman Empire from the adverse effects of Turkey's defeat in the War.

Mahatma Gandhi had arrived in India from South Africa a few years earlier, and the political movement was at its peak. When approached by the Muslim leaders, Gandhiji readily agreed to include the Khilafat movement in the Congress programme. This provided Maulana Azad yet another argument why Muslims should make common cause with the Congress and the Hindus in their struggle for the Independence of the country. When Hindus were prepared to espouse the Khilafat movement



which was purely Islamic and concerned only the Muslims of India, there was no reason why the Muslims should not reciprocate and join hands with them in their efforts to get freedom for the country in which the Muslims were equally concerned.

He further advanced an argument from the life of the Prophet. When the Prophet and his followers were persecuted by the non-believers in Mecca, he decided to migrate to Medina. He was convinced that the Meccan enemies would not let him rest in peace and would surely follow him to Medina and make every effort to make his and his followers' life difficult. Medina had a mixed population of Arabs and Jews. Most of the Arabs had embraced Islam but naturally the Jews were not fully reconciled to the Muslims getting the upper hand. They were mostly engaged in agriculture and trade and were, therefore, richer and more powerful than the Arab population. When the Prophet reached Medina, he realized that in case the Meccans attacked, all the residents of Medina including the Jews would suffer. He, therefore, invited the Jews to make common cause with the Muslims and offered to enter into a pact with them for the defence of the city against the invaders. The Jews accepted the offer. A pact was drawn up in which the Muslims and the Jews were termed as "one nation" (*Ummatun Wahidatun*). The pact was fairly comprehensive and gave details of how the two contracting parties were to behave and what their duties and rights were, both in times of war and peace.

Azad cited this pact as analogy and argued that the conditions prevailing in India were exactly the same as they were when the Prophet had made a pact with the Jews in Medina. Today, Hindus and Muslims of India were pitted against the British, as the Muslims and Jews of Medina were threatened by the Meccan Quraish. If the Prophet made common cause with the Jews accepting the whole population of Medina as "one nation" why could not the Muslims and Hindus of India be termed as "one nation"? Both have lived in this country for centuries. Their problems are the same. Their objectives are the same. And both stand to gain if the country became independent. British are today in the same position as were the Quraish of Mecca, when the Prophet had signed this pact with the Jews. This argument was so effective that the Indian National Congress and Majlis-i-Khilafat could, on no account be considered two different entities. The scenes of Hindu-Muslim unity seen as a consequence of this were unique. This effort in due course bore fruit and the country gained its Independence in 1947.

It may not be out of place to mention here a fact in parenthesis. Maulana Azad's attitude towards the Ottoman Caliphate was a little different from the common belief held by the Muslims of India. Muslims held the Ottoman Government in great reverence as it was the successor of the Caliphs of Islam, who had followed the death of the Prophet. It was also



the custodian of the holy places of Islam, Mecca and Medina. The attitude of the Indian Muslims was more emotional than realistic. Maulana Azad, on the other hand, though completely one with the sanctity of the institution of Caliphate, did not subscribe to the general feeling of allegiance to Turkey. In his opinion the Turkish Government was a localised institution and in spite of its being the senior-most government amongst the Muslim countries, it did not fulfil the condition of a true Islamic Caliphate. That is why when Ataturk Mustapha Kamal Pasha abolished the Khilafat in March 1924 and deposed Sultan Abdul Majid, Azad's reaction was very mild and least critical.

The Khilafat movement continued in full strength. Early in 1921, a meeting of its Executive Committee was held at Karachi. This was attended by most of the leading Muslims. The meeting passed a resolution wherein it was stated that the British were the enemies of Islam and therefore it was against Islamic teachings to co-operate with or serve them. The resolution called upon all Muslim personnel to boycott British service and resign from the army. The reaction of the government to this resolution was very sharp. All the leaders who had participated in the meeting were arrested and prosecuted for sedition and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The same year, the annual session of the Khilafat was held in August at Agra. Maulana Azad presided over this session. In his Presidential Address he made a special reference to the resolution of the Executive Committee passed at Karachi and the subsequent court case resulting in the incarceration of these leaders. He emphatically proclaimed that what these leaders had said at Karachi was a fundamental article of faith of the Muslims and he himself was of the same view. If this was sedition, every follower of Islam in India held this belief and, therefore, he invited the British government to put them all behind bars. Again he cited his authority from the Quran (*mumtahina*, 60-9) which clearly enjoins non-cooperation with the oppressor.

In his Presidential Address he said that the British army had killed Muslims in India and outside. During the 1914-18 War, the British army had attacked Muslim countries of the Middle East and killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims. The Muslim soldiers who were in the British army were forced to fight and kill their own brethren and co-religionists. Thus they had disobeyed this clear and imperative injunction of the Quran. This was not only anti-Muslim, but a sin. In order to escape from recurrence of such a contingency, the only way left to them was to boycott the British army and not enlist in it any more. He, therefore, justified the Karachi resolution and gave it religious sanctity. The Government of India ignored his address and did not accept his challenge to arrest him on this count.

Soon after, he repeated his stand at the annual session of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, Lahore, November 1921. Here again, a resolution was passed to this effect. The Government realised the dangerous consequences

of not taking drastic action against this as well. They got another opportunity very soon. The same year the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) visited India and the Indian National Congress decided to boycott the visit on a national scale. With other Congress leaders, Azad too was arrested and sentenced. Once again he used the same argument that co-operation with the British Government was un-Islamic.

In short, it was Azad who not only brought Hindus and Muslims nearer each other in the national struggle but also convinced the Muslims of the wrong attitude adopted by them under the guidance of the Sir Syed school. It is, nevertheless, a fact that after the abolition of Caliphate and the deposition and exile of Sultan Abdul Majid by Ataturk in March 1924, the *raison d'être* for the Majlis-i-Khilafat had disappeared and the movement became defunct. But the seeds of Hindu-Muslim unity sown in its heyday bore fruit. The two communities continued working together in the national movement. The services rendered by Azad in this behalf were unparalleled. Until his last day he remained a staunch believer in the unity of all inhabitants of the country and the one-nation theory. What a heavy price he had to pay for his belief! But no argument or pressure could deter him from the path he had chosen for himself. He had propounded the theory in 1912, when he started his famous weekly *Al-Hilal*, at the age of twenty-four. This paper did not have a very long life, it was published for a little over three years. Its influence, however, was deep and far-reaching which can be traced even to some of the movements of today. The stand he had taken then and the objective that he had set before himself were for a lifetime and he never wavered for a moment until the very end. That shows not only the strength of his conviction but also the correctness of his judgment.

It is no exaggeration to say that he was the real philosopher-guide of the Muslim community during the national struggle; whereas other leaders were the operative hands.

# A Literary Artist in Urdu

*Aal-e-Ahmad Suroor*

Alas, the times could not provide means for the utilization of my gifts. Ghalib had only to lament (the neglect of) his poetry. I do not know how many things would go with me to my grave. Sometimes, when I think about it, a strange world of anguish and grief envelopes me. Religion, arts and sciences, literature, belles lettres, poetry, there is no avenue where the Benevolent Being had not offered countless vistas in the mind of this unfortunate person. Every moment, every minute, enriched the expanse of my heart. So much so, that every day I find myself at a new stage in the world of ideas, and the wonders of every new stage, dim the vision of the earlier stage. But alas, the hand that showered on me these riches of thought and observation, perhaps, wanted to keep me empty-handed as far as the provision of resources was concerned. The sorrow of my life is this; I was not the man for this age, this situation.

*(Letter to Ghulam Rasul Mehr, 3 December 1937)*

This extract is revealing in several ways. It shows what Maulana Azad felt about himself, the range of his interests, and the non-fulfilment of many of his dreams. The idea recurs again and again, in his writings. No doubt, his primary concern was religion, but from the beginning he was passionately interested in literature. All his writings show his wide reading of classical Arabic and Persian literature and his deep interest in Urdu poetry. He began writing ghazals about the age of fourteen or fifteen and also started contributing essays to various journals, besides editing a few himself. He also addressed literary and religious gatherings and very early showed remarkable gifts as an orator. At first, he wrote explanatory notes on Arabic texts used in the Madrasas, then he took up translation of some religious texts into Urdu. Soon after, he wrote short essays about Ghazali and Newton, in a local journal *Al-Misbah*, which he also edited for

sometime. He wrote on Hafiz, Khayyam and other Persian poets in *Ahsanul Akhbar*. In May 1902, his first contribution to journalism appeared in *Makhzan*, Lahore, followed by another on the Persian poet Khaqani, in August 1902. He also planned a *tazkirah* of Persian poets about this time. He edited the prose section of *Khadang-e-Nazar*, a literary journal, edited by Naubat Rai Nazar from Lucknow and also contributed ghazals to journals devoted to publication of this form. He brought out *Lisan-ul-Sidq* in 1903, in which social reform, development of scientific literature in Urdu, creation of taste, and criticism or balanced reviews on books in Urdu, were highlighted. He particularly stressed the need for discussing both the merits and demerits of a book when reviewing it. Commenting on a book dealing with the fortunes of the citizens of Sadiquepur (Bihar) who had suffered a great deal after 1857, he praised the contents but criticized the old-fashioned style, pleading for a modern approach to language. Ajmal Khan, who was his Private Secretary after Independence, has written

Before writing, he always collected verses that could illustrate or clinch his argument and he always inserted them in the text in such a way that if the poet himself heard them, he would wonder how the verse had become more poignant and elevated. He would always strive for compression and would correct his writings again and again. He would weigh words and ideas in his mind and place them suitably like a peerless craftsman.

After the closure of *Lisan-ul-Sidq* in 1904, he helped Shibli in *Al-Nadwa* in 1905. In 1906-7, he edited *Vakil* (Amritsar), a well-known tri-weekly journal. It was here that he felt the need for starting a journal of his own and after deliberation of several years, *Al-Hilal* was published from Calcutta in April 1912, in Naskh type, complete with illustrations. It revolutionized Urdu journalism and very soon became immensely popular.

It is necessary to keep this background in mind before we have a look at *Al-Hilal*. Because of the deep interest of Maulana Azad, first in religion and then in politics, his sustained attachment to literature, his lifelong association with the leading Urdu writers of the day, his anxiety to get hold of the latest books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic, has not received the attention it deserves. He showed in *Al-Hilal*, a remarkable vision and a fairly mature mind (though he was only twenty-four years old). No doubt like its contemporary journals *Vakil*, *Zamindar*, *Paisa Akhbar*, *Mashriq*, *Comrade* (English) and *Hamdard* (Urdu), in *Al-Hilal* too, Pan-Islamic issues and events were dominant, yet it was highly critical of Western imperialist policies. It urged Muslims to join non-Muslims in the struggle for the freedom of the country, and it also kept its readers informed about literary trends and published the hitherto unknown verses of Ghalib. The neat Naskh typographical form and illustrations made it a pioneer in Urdu

journalism Azad collected around him young writers like Sulaiman Nadvi, Abdus Salam Nadvi and Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, who were deeply influenced by him and even followed his style to some extent

The first issue of the weekly *Al-Hilal* appeared on July 13, 1912 and the last in November 1914. After a year it again appeared as *Al-Balagh*, on November 12, 1915 and lasted until April 3, 1916. The First World War, and the press guarantees demanded by the British Government, finally killed it. Broadly speaking, the period (1912-1916) is called the *Al-Hilal* period in Urdu journalism. The important themes are re-interpretation of Islam, a moral vision for Muslims, need for a party of God (*Hizbullah*), the travail in the Islamic world, criticism of the pro-British policy of the Aligarh group, the intellectual and literary scene in the Middle East, and discussions about suitable Urdu technical terms in arts and sciences. The editor, though a very young man, was already being called *Imamul Hind* (Imam of India). He was an orator who could deeply move big gatherings. He was a romantic, a visionary, a dreamer. Gifted with remarkable rhetorical skills and armed with apt quotations from Arabic, Persian and Urdu, he was adept at making familiar things new and new things familiar. In his foreward to the first issue of *Al-Hilal*, he wrote:

It was during the last nights of the winter of 1906 in Amritsar that, with my open eyes, I had a dream. The aims and projects of men, till they are in the mind, should be regarded as dreams of minds awake. Full six years were spent in seeking its realization. The pain of longings and the tumult of expectations kept me constantly restless. And now the realization of this fond dream is here.

Even in translation, the magic and the poetry of the words peeps out. They moved, thrilled, and inspired the readers.

The style of *Al-Hilal* is rhetorical at its best. Modern Urdu prose has moved away from rhetoric to logic. The style of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, standardized by Hali and refined by Shibli, is the dominant prose style in Urdu. But the style of Mohammad Hussain Azad in *Abe-Hayat* and *Darbar-e-Akbari* and the style of Abul Kalam Azad in *Al-Hilal* is also an important style in Urdu prose. In Azad there is a gleam of Jamaluddin Afghani. The impassioned prose of *Al-Hilal* cannot be dismissed as merely pedantic and artificial. It cast its spell over its readers, as it carried them along its inspired course, as a mighty torrent does. It touched their hearts, their minds, their whole being. No doubt it appealed more to the emotions than to the intellect; it galvanized, and not merely informed them. It was, elitist, but the reader of those days was also elitist. It can appropriately be called the grand style of Urdu prose and reminds us of the language of scriptures. It was, therefore, natural for Sajjad Ansari, a young writer of those days, to say, "When I read Abul Kalam Azad, I am

reminded of God I am sure that if the Quran had been revealed in Urdu, either Abul Kalam's prose or Iqbal's poetry would have been chosen for it'' The literary merit of this style rests on its similes and metaphors, its apt quotations of verses from classical literature, its spell-binding charm and telling effect. Words were a universe in themselves here.

It should also be remembered here that the readers of *Al-Hilal* were either the ulema, or those well-versed in Arabic and Persian. For them the quotations from the Quran, the allusions to the classics, and the literary masterpieces of the age, were quite familiar and Azad's language was like a richly laid out feast. It fired the imagination, it warmed the emotions, and it pointed to a life of intellectual endeavour. Its influence on Niaz Fatehpuri, Qazi Abdul Ghaffar and even Dr Zakir Husain, is beyond doubt.

*Tazkirah* was written at a friend's request during Azad's stay at Ranchi. It was expected to be an autobiography, but an account of his ancestors occupied all the pages written in five months. At the publisher's repeated requests a chapter about himself was added by the writer. Only the first volume of *Tazkirah* was published. The chapter, supposed to be a life story, is delightfully vague. The style of *Tazkirah* reminds us of Ghalib's *Nuskha-e-Hamidia*, where the language is highly Persianized, but Maulana can also write in simple and direct language. The flights of fancy and the down-to-earth mode, both are there. The following extracts will illustrate this.

The blend of emotions in the realms of discussion and observation is a flaw, but the call for the right path is entirely enriched by emotions,

We should keep in our sheath, our own glistening sword. The exhibition of the swords of others may command the respect of the spectators, but we are not entitled to this respect. It is the due of the owner of the sword.

The test of the truth is that neither the change in the touchstone, nor in time, can cast any doubt on its sterling worth.

The excuse of many tall persons is that times are not in accord with us, and resources and means for the task in hand are not available. But the resolute conqueror of time comes forward and says that if time is against me, I shall take it along with me, if resources are not available, I shall provide for them with my own hands, if the land is not with me, the skies should descend (for help), if men are not there, the angels should join.

The readers of *Al-Hilal* and *Tazkirah* could be moved only with this style. A matter-of-fact, bare style, would have left them cold. It was the style for that age. In the last chapter, where he is supposed to tell his life-



story, he admits to every possible folly, but actually reveals nothing. This is what he has to say in this regard

If there was one bondage, one could specify it, if there was one chain, one could count its loops. There was only one heart, but arrows to pierce it were in many hands, there was only one glance, but the whole world was full of beautiful visions. Every attraction despatched its arrow, every robber threw his noose. Every spell-binder cast his spell, every vision, dazzling the senses, wanted to capture me in its net, and make me a victim of its own hunting bag.

After this turmoil of the heart and the soul, Azad reaches the stage where the nature of his mission in life is brought home to him. He realizes what his goal is, and how he has to conduct himself to reach it. In *Tazkirah* he says:

It was He who opened the gates of knowledge, it was He who unfolded the need for action, the gospels of Gnosis were on His lips, the riches of reality were in His benevolent hands. He was the teacher of the essence of *Shariah*. He was the guide in the ups and downs of *Tariqah*. He revealed the secrets of the Quran and the intricacies of the *Sunnah*, He bestowed vision, He blessed the heart; what difficulty was not solved by Him, what complications not resolved by Him, what was the sickness for which medicine was not available from His dispensary.

Azad had begun his interpretation and commentary on the Quran in *Al-Hilal*, but at Ranchi he devoted most of his time to it. The first volume was published in 1931 and the second in 1937. The introduction to the first volume is a *tour de force*. Here, he recalls how a man followed him when he was returning from the mosque after evening prayers. On questioning him Azad came to know that he had come from Qandhar (Afghanistan). Most of the journey he had covered on foot to get enlightened on some points in the Quran. He had read every word of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*. The man left after a few days without informing Azad. In dedicating the *Tarjuman* to him, Azad says, "I do not remember his name. I do not know whether he is alive or not. But if my memory had not betrayed me, I would have dedicated this book to him."

*Tarjuman-ul-Quran* combines a fairly long introduction and comments, with the translation. It is not intended to be a literary masterpiece. The translation and comments are solely meant to convey the real message of Quran. Azad says in the introduction, "Now that the first volume of the *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is being published and the second being printed, I can say with confidence that the greatest obstacle of the day, in the path of the religious reform of the Muslims, has been removed." The



introduction has many flashes of his great literary gifts. Azad had to rewrite portions of his work, because the British Government had seized his papers and books, when he was interned. So when he began his labour of love again, it was at first very difficult to traverse the ground already covered, but he went on with the work and soon got back the zest with which he had started. Writing about this, he says, "At the beginning I did not have the mood (for the task in hand), but as soon as a few goblets of taste and enthusiasm were in circulation, all the restraints of mind were gone and then it looked as if there was never any room for dejection or depression in this tumultuous world of intoxication "

Azad had a tremendous ego and managed to talk about himself, whatever the theme of his writing. At one place he says, "Whatever is old, I inherited, and whatever is new, I blazed a trail for it on my own. For me the new approaches of the age are as familiar as every nook and corner of the old ways." He is always conscious of the great difference between the development of his own mind and that of others. His individuality, his approach to problems, his reaction to the events of the day, all illustrate the wide gap between his contemporaries and himself. The introduction is meant for the elucidation of the various aspects of the work in hand, but Azad manages to refer to his mental gifts again

There is no certitude of my heart (mind) which is not pierced by the thorns of doubt and there is no anchor of my soul which has not swayed through all the trails of denial. I have gulped mouthfuls of poison from every cup and tried the prescriptions of antidotes from every dispensary. When I was thirsty, my parched lips were not like those of others and when I was satiated, its source was not available on any highway

Generally, the argument of the commentary could not afford the rhetorical flashes, which had become almost a second nature in the case of Azad. It had to be simple, clear and precise, as well as dignified. The commentary shows this also. He refers to the close relationship between the simple, and the true when he says:

It should be borne in mind that anything in the world which is nearer to the truth is, in the same measure, simple and heart-warming. Nature itself is not jumbled up in any sphere. Involution and obscurity is all due to artificiality and mannerism. Thus, what is true and real, is bound to be simple and pleasing.

The main argument of the *Tarjuman* is that there is a universal element in religion. Azad differentiates between the broad moral approach of all religions and their codified directives for social life (called *Shariah* in Islam). He says:

*Din* (Religion) is one thing, *Shariah* (codified Law) is another *Din* is one and given to all in one form Only difference is in this codified law and this difference was inevitable as the state of affairs in every nation was not the same So it was essential that guidelines for action should be according to conditions of each Differences in codes of law do not mean differences in essential religion You have forgotten the essence of religion and are accusing each other of falsehood because of differences in the legal systems

We are not concerned here with the depth or superficiality of these arguments We have only to note that this is not the rhetorical style of *Al-Hilal* and *Tazkirah*, but a lucid, logical, and neat exposition of the main theme So the literary artist in Azad can adapt himself to the situation When he is expounding an intellectual and philosophical theme, he is precise, simple and direct When his imagination has a free rein, he uses picturesque language and all available rhetorical devices

Azad was more occupied with politics in the thirties and the forties So *Tarjuman* could not be finished His writings now consisted of addresses, letters and *Ghubar-i-Khatir* written in Ahmednagar Fort jail

*Ghubar-i-Khatir* is the outpouring of his soul, while in prison Written in the form of letters to a friend, it has twenty-four letters, of which twenty were written in Ahmednagar, one earlier and three later. Twenty-one are an epistolary form for expression of personal thoughts and feelings, early life, taste, range of interests (particularly music), historical anecdotes, philosophical musings and aesthetic delights Azad, free from his religious and philosophical pursuits and political activities, seems to be in his true element He is alone, he is free, he is himself Solitude is bliss to him *Ghubar-i-Khatir* is a literary masterpiece. He talks ecstatically about his favourite brand of white Jasmine tea, about flowers, birds, changes of seasons, the crusades, egoist literature, Aurangzeb's romance, the history of music, philosophy, religion and science, and above all, about himself The writing is interspersed with quotations from Arabic, Persian and Urdu *Ghubar-i-Khatir* is the key to the versatile personality of Azad The man is fully mirrored in the book. The style is now less Persianized, many English words are used, the language is no longer that of an orator or preacher but that of a poet, an artist, an aesthete, the lover of nature, who is truly happy in his own company, can smile at the foibles of others and can be transported into a new world by recalling a verse. A few extracts will bear this out:

The road is straight from the railway station to the Fort I began to think that the journey through aims and objectives (of life) is similar When the feet move forward, there is no turning point. If you ponder over it, all the journeys in life are the same There is hardly one step

from life to death

In this workshop of many hues and airs, how many doors are opened to be closed and how many closed to be opened

When people were gathering flowers, savouring momentary delights, our lot were the thorns of yearnings and longings. They gathered flowers and left thorns. We picked up the thorns and left the flowers

The stillness of the night, dim stars, dwindling glow of the moon, advanced April night, the minarets of the Taj standing erect, on all four sides, the cupolas holding their breath, and, in between, the moon-washed marble dome enthroned and motionless on its base, below, the silvery waves of the Jamuna swinging to and fro, and rushing on, and, above, countless eyes of the stars staring in wonder at this splendour.

The literary artist is really free to weave his fancy flowers in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, but some mention has also to be made of his addresses. Malik Ram has collected fifteen addresses in *Khuthbat-e-Azad* (Sahitya Akademi edition). Of these, the Presidential Address to the Ramgarh session of Indian National Congress (1940), Hindustani Committee Bihar (1937), Arabic Syllabus Committee (1947), and Delhi Muslims Meeting (1947) are more important from our point of view. In the Ramgarh address he has this to say about our composite culture

Our common history of eleven hundred years has enriched all aspects of Indian life with its consolidating forces. Our languages, our poetry, our literature, our living, our taste, our dress, our customs and manners, countless realities of our daily life, there is no niche on which the stamp of our common life is not manifest. We had different dialects, but began to speak one language, our customs and manners were strange for each other, but they all fused to bring about a new pattern. Our old dress can be seen in old pictures, but we cannot find it on our bodies now. All this common heritage is the prized possession of our composite culture and we do not wish to part with it in order to return to the days when our common life had not begun.

The address to Delhi Muslims in October 1947, brings out the Azad of *Al-Hilal*, but in a more moving and mature manner

Today you are afraid of earthquakes. Once you yourself were one. Today, you are trembling because of the darkness around, do you not remember that your existence itself was a source of light. The grey rain from the clouds has made you hold up your trousers, but your ancestors waded the oceans, trampled the

crests of mountains, smiled at lightning, laughed aloud when thunder rolled, turned away the might of scorching winds, and frenzied dusts of storm were told to look the other way. It is belief in the throes of death which has made those grappling with the collars of kings, play with their own, making them so forgetful of God, as if they never had believed in Him.

We see the literary artist peeping out from his earliest writings, selecting words and phrases which seem to him more apt. When engaged in polemics, he does not lose sight of the impact of a telling word or phrase. His journalistic writings made a tremendous impact on his readers because he could point out the significance of the events of the day within the large scheme of things. Touched by rhetoric, full of similes and metaphors, adept at quotations from a wide range, and an elevated language, he moved the hearts and minds of many men. He revised what he wrote, to make his words more compelling, more telling. He made Urdu prose masculine, sublime, colourful. There is a clear evolution in his style from the extravagant use of words to compact, concise, compressed language. But the style remains elevated and elevating throughout. Like Samuel Johnson, the great English writer, he could never pour all of himself into his work. The writer remains greater than his writing, the artist greater than his art. Azad had an encyclopaedic mind, he bridged the gulf between the old and the new, and the East and the West, he towered above his fellow-men like a colossus, aloof from the multitude and yet always deeply involved with their destiny.

# Religious Philosophy

*Prof. Syed Vahiduddin*

Islamic thought has many dimensions, and of them the most important are the religious, the philosophical, and the mystic dimensions. Islam is not a religion which can be exhausted in credal formulations. Its ethos has found expression both in artistic achievement, above all, in poetry and architecture, as well as in socio-political institutions. As a religion it appears as a challenge to the established order of the day. Though it emerged as the address of God to man in the bosom of a child of the desert, it soon made itself heard far and wide, and today its call reverberates from the minarets of the mosques in all continents. It has been rightly said that Islam is the only one among great religions which appeared in the full light of history. No less an iconoclastic thinker than Friedrich Nietzsche called Islam "The roar of the lion" in the desert, and Hegel called it "The revolution of the Orient". This is not the occasion to assess its impact on history, which is as effective as ever, nor to appreciate its achievements in culture. Our problem is rather limited, and this is to discover what it means as a religion in the context of one of the most prominent figures of the recent past, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Of the figures who have played a decisive role in the making of Muslim identity in the recent past, there are some who belong to countries other than the Indian subcontinent and yet whose influence is felt directly or indirectly on Muslim thinking. The names of Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897) and Abduh of Egypt (d. 1905) deserve special mention. But on the Indian subcontinent it was Shah Waliullah (1703-62) who tried to re-invigorate Muslim thought and initiate religious renaissance. Though some of his energy was unfortunately frittered away in inter-Islamic sectarian disputes and controversies, yet the credit for formulating Islamic ethos, without stripping it of its mystic dimension goes to him. Himself belonging to the *Naqshbandiya Silsila* of the Sufis, he was inspired by Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) and yet he did not blindly follow the path chalked out by him. This is apparent in his bold attempt to reconcile Ibn

Arabi's (1164-1240) doctrine of the Unity of Being (*Wahdatul Wajud*) with the doctrine of the Unity of Appearances (*Wahdat al-Shahud*) expounded by Ahmad Sirhindi. In more recent times, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) appeared on the scene. Sir Syed was not a systematic thinker and yet it will not be fair to leave him out of recent Islamic thought. Much has been said, often in a critical vein, of his ideas, his exegesis of the Quran and his ideology. It is true that he might have made many errors due to lack of linguistic equipment, or due to his ignorance of the deeper currents of European thought. His constant use of the word "nature" and his exclusive reliance on some British philosophical trends naturally provoked strong suspicions and even led Jamaluddin Afghani to denounce his so-called "naturalism". But what he did was to provoke the Muslims to understand the Quran in its own right and not to use it simply for the sake of pious recitation and ritual purity. Many of his interpretations may have taken a superficial view of reality. He could not appreciate the element of mystery which haunted the Quran as it must haunt the reading of every authentic sacred scripture. It was his achievement to make Muslims, whether modern or trained in Islamic tradition, alive to modern challenges.

In the period after World War I, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Mohammad Iqbal loom large on the intellectual horizon of the sub-continent. But the direction which their thinking took, differed widely as their spiritual and ancestral background had its roots in different milieus. The one was proud of his Brahmin ancestry and in spite of all that he has said of himself and all that critics said of him, his sensitivity remained as much Indian as Islamic. The way seers of India figure in his works, especially in *Javed Nama* and the place that is allotted to them in the celestial sphere, and the love and respect with which he imbibed their teaching, unmistakably, show his roots. He never disowned the spiritual teachers of the soil which nourished him. The Sufi poet and seer, Jalaluddin Rumi, whose impact on the poet was unsurpassed by any other, serves as an enduring bond between Bharat and the Islamic world of spiritual realisation.

Now Maulana Azad's world is different. He who was born in Mecca, belonged to a spiritual fraternity. Schooled and trained in Islamic tradition, he soon found himself a victim of doubt and self-questioning. Iqbal's thoughts are dynamic and ever moving towards new horizons. But in his life he trod the beaten path, while the life of Maulana was fired by revolutionary zeal from the very beginning. Iqbal pleaded for patience. As the students of Aligarh wanted a message from him, he reminded them of their immaturity and advised them not to raise the banner of revolt against foreign rule before its time.

Maulana Azad was from the very beginning revolutionary in nature and he grew in a revolutionary mould. Iqbal, of course, did not deny the importance of revolution, his tribute to Lenin bears eloquent testimony

to that Though he insisted that the thrust of the Quran was towards "deed" rather than "idea", and, all along, pleaded for a life of action, he did not translate his ideas into action himself Azad's life was a long struggle for one cause or another till, at last, he got involved completely in the Indian National Movement, and he did not find any contradiction between the universality of Islam and the nationalist urge In all fairness to the pioneers of the Indian National Movement like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru it must be admitted that they also did not subscribe to nationalistic chauvinism, but thought and lived with a supra-national sense of human destiny and gladly considered as their own the struggle for national determination wherever it emerged

Religious assurance cannot be vouchsafed without doubt As Azad himself has confessed, he had gone through a period of irreligious crisis when doubts prevailed upon him and what he had inherited from tradition and his forefathers was questioned A classic example of such crisis and doubts is offered in the life of Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111)<sup>1</sup> He has given a masterly analysis of his mental conflict, his disenchantment with traditional learning and with philosophy, and the authoritarian instructions of *Batiniyah* (esotericism), and he seemed to have arrived at a dead end with no possibility of escape But he soon found out that aside from these alternatives and options there was yet another and he tried it This was the way of the Sufis. He shows how senses are deceived and how they are corrected by reason But reason has its own limitations and does not give us any access to the sphere which lies beyond the senses This experience is founded on what he called *zaug* (taste) or intuition But Azad does not seem to have gone through any mystic upheaval, so much so that one might suspect that he was devoid of mystic sensibility That this is not so is clearly brought out in his essay on Sarmad which he wrote in his youth<sup>2</sup> Sarmad, like al-Hallaj, was not simply the victim of theological fanaticism In both cases, political interest and conspiracies had the last word Azad's sympathetic and sensitive approach to the whole episode brings out, clearly, the fact that mystic understanding was alive in him, though for some reason or another it was not allowed to develop further The rigid orthodox reshaping of Sufism in the hands of Mujaddid got the upper hand This clearly shows that in Azad conflicting elements were allowed to coexist without any attempt to integrate or reconcile them in a systematic conceptual whole

Maulana Azad's reflection on the opening verses takes him right into the heart of the Quran They show how God is to be understood He is above all, *Rab*, the sustainer and cherisher of all creation, of all the

<sup>1</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith And Practice of Al-Ghazzali*, London, 1953

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. C. W. Troll's observations in an excellent recent publication, Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad, An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988



worlds, visible or invisible. The whole of the Quran continues the all-pervasive theme of His *rububiyah*, of divine providence and nurture. His providence embraces both the physical and spiritual level and His signs are found in nature, in history, and in our own selves.

God, who is all-sustaining, is further defined as *Rahman* and *Rahim*. Both these attributes are derived from the same root *rahma*. Now the question arises why and how *rahma* expresses itself through two divine names *Rahman* and *Rahim*. There have been alternative explanations, but we will stick to Azad's way of thought. To *Rahman* is attributed *rahma* (grace), without defining it, *Rahim* articulates its perpetual activity, a quality which never ceases in its manifold expression.

Maulana Azad elaborates the Quranic vision of God by reflecting on one other attribute, that of justice. He is not only *Rahman* or *Rahim* but the Just who dispenses justice according to one's own actions and intentions. However, His justice is to be tempered by the all-pervasive *rahma*. No doubt *rahma* seems to enjoy an ontological priority over justice which itself is a part of *rahma*.

The Quranic vision of God is based on the signs of a purposely creative activity which we find disclosed all around us, in the starry heaven as well as in the secrets of our own selves.

*Al-Quran* calls this purposive provision and faith *rububiyat* or divine providence or nature. Life could not have been possible without divine guidance and constant care of all that is. It is but natural that the all-pervasive Providence should, first of all, express itself through His guidance (*Hidaya*). Guidance has different degrees. At the animal level it appears as instinct, or unacquired knowledge. It is the capacity through which birds and beasts take care of themselves, as well as the capacity to look after their own progeny without any instruction through any means, verbal or otherwise. At a higher stage, guidance is derived by sense perception. The animal becomes aware of its prey and food through sensory apprehension. But at the human stage guidance is given through reason. Man is not confined to sensory apprehension but through inference he can move a step forward beyond what is immediately given through the senses. Is our intellect or reason the ultimate arbiter or source of our knowledge? Reason has its own limitations and cannot go beyond the sensory data immediately available, or beyond the anticipation based on the data. When we look at our experience we find everything has its own measure of capacity. Even the planets move according to a set measure. This measure or the principle of development which is latent in man and animal is called *Taqdir*. In other words man is not mechanically determined but can act according to a principle of his own development.

The main contention of Azad is that what is essential in religion is called *Din* (Faith in the Transcendent), and its historical expression is called *Minhaj* or *Shariah*. Religion, in substance, is one and the same, but its

articulation varies with the shifting situation of history. The historical relativity of the *Shariah* and the metahistorical substance of the Message are clearly distinguished in the Quran:

For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way  
Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But  
that He may try you by that which He hath given you. So vie  
with one another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return,  
and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ. (*Quran*  
5.48)\*

Again

Unto each nation have we given sacred rites which they are to  
perform, so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but  
summon unto thy Lord Lo! Thou indeed followest right guid-  
ance. (*Quran* 22 67)

What is important is to stick to the substance, which is to worship *Rab*, the Sustainer, the Creator who is all Mercy and Benevolence, and to do good. What the Quran fights against is groupism or schism (*Tashayyuh* and *Tahazzub*), and it is this which is repugnant to the Quran. The all-embracing vision of God, the underlying unity of mankind, and the call to justice is all that it amounts to. Unfortunately, the all-unifying call of the Quran was not given the attention that it deserved and even Muslims began to split themselves into parties and groups, "each group happy with its own faction" Maulana Azad's brand of Humanism is God-oriented and man-centred. Unlike Marxism, it does not exclude God but involves Him in its perspective. Thus it says.

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Scripture and the Prophets, and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarers and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing (*Quran II 177*)

The Quranic God is a Personal God to whom one can pray, and with whom one can communicate. But in the Sufi perspective, especially as developed by Ibn Arabi, a distinction is made between *Wahid* and *Ahad*, between God as qualified by attributes and names, and God as He is in Himself, without any qualification and determination (*deus abs conditus*).

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\* The English rendering of the Quranic verse is from M M Pickthall *The Glorious Koran*

This kind of distinction is not unknown outside the Islamic thought between a personal God (*Ishwara*) and *Nirguna Brahma*. In the Quranic context we find God spoken to as manifest (*Zahir*) and also as unmanifest (*Batin*). Maulana Azad, in his commentary, and, with no less eloquence, also in his letters (twelfth and thirteenth of *Ghubar-i-Khatir*) tries to lead us on the Quranic way to God as qualified by names. He is *Rah*, the sustainer and cherisher, *Rahman*, the gracious, and *Rahim*, the merciful. God manifests himself through his signs, in nature, in history, in our own selves. Maulana Azad refrains from speculating on His hidden essence and even finds faults with Shah Waliullah who tries to justify the well-known theory of *Wahdatul Wajud* from certain Quranic verses. It is clear that the influence of Ibn Taimiya has moulded, in a certain way, the thought of Maulana Azad, who does not want to go beyond the meaning of the Quranic words as understood by the companions of the Prophet and immediate successors. Azad's concern is more pragmatic. He is interested only in the relevance of the Quran to mankind and not in its esoteric interpretation. Thus we are led to God through the aesthetic pattern which we find in the creation, as much as in the harmony and order of the universe. The world of experience, says Maulana Azad, offers a perfect aesthetic pattern, whose grandeur overawes us and whose beauty fascinates us, and this cannot but lead us to assume an intelligent will as operative behind the phenomena (Letter twelve, *Ghubar-i-Khatir*).

The Quranic way to God is through *rububiyat*, through divine Providence and nurture. The world was not created in vain but with truth and with a purpose (Quran 29:44). Azad presents the Quranic perspective with great poetic artistry. Indeed, the spectacle of the mutual adjustment of the sexes, and the playful ordering of nature which makes life possible, impresses as much the unsophisticated mind as the sophisticated philosophical sceptic, and forces one and all to reflect seriously on the rationality of the universe. Any argument for the existence of God cannot, of course, be conclusive, but can offer intimations sufficient enough to invoke faith. Immanuel Kant, who mercilessly criticised the traditional arguments, had to admit that the argument through purpose, "Deserves to be treated always with respect". But he rightly pointed out that this way of thought leads us only to the idea of the Architect of the universe but not to the idea of an All-Powerful Creator. Anyhow, reflection on the beauty and order of the universe creates in us a favourable climate for the growth of faith in the Unseen which the Quran calls *Al-Ghaib*.

The Quran as a revealed scripture did not appear in a historical vacuum and unrelated to human conditions and concerns. It conveyed the message through a human medium and through a human vocabulary and idiom. Hence, Maulana Azad seems to have preferred to regard the Quranic words not so much as words of God but rather as words from God (*Kalam min inda-Allah*). The source is divine but its expression is histori-

cally conditioned by human linguistic usage. It is, therefore, necessary to find out what is essential and what is not essential in the holy text, and to distinguish between different levels of the Quranic revelation. The inability to discriminate has led to much confusion, and has given rise to so-called fundamentalist movements. Maulana Azad affirmed unequivocally that the Quran does not only say that there is truth in all religions but that all religions are equally true, though the followers have deviated from the original thrust of their faith, and have developed a groupist allegiance and a separatist tendency. What is called Islam is nothing but the *Din*, which was preached by all prophets and messengers of God. It salutes them all and does not encourage any distinction among them. It does not make salvation an exclusive privilege of any faith as "God's *rahma* encompasseth all things"

Lo! Those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Mo-hammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sa-beans—whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day, and doeth right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve (II-62)

The warning to Muslims as well as to other people of the Book is no less affirmative.

It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor the desires of the People of the Scripture. He who doeth wrong will have the recompense thereof, and will not find against Allah any protecting friend or helper (IV-123)

The Quran goes a step further and declares unequivocally

Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to Allah while doing good, his reward is with his Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (II-112)

If Maulana Azad later made pronouncements that seemed to compromise his original stand in order to placate the Ulema, this could not affect the authenticity of his earlier pronouncement conveyed through the concluding remarks of his commentary on *Al-Fatiha*.

The value of religion and its relevance to mankind cannot be judged better than by its attitude to sinners. The Quran is permeated by the spirit of forgiveness and infuses hope in those who have been led astray.

O my bondsmen who have been given to waste, to their own hurt, lose not hope in the mercy of Allah who forgives all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful (Quran 39-53).

Maulana Azad quotes a Hadith recorded by Muslim which speaks eloquently of the Quranic attitude to the erring souls:

By Him in whose hands is my life, if you become such that you cease to sin, God will remove you from the earth and bring

in your place people who are liable to sin and ask forgiveness from God

How different is the Quranic attitude from the attitude of those who are ever ready to inflict the stiffest penalties for offences which are as much the product of a corrupt society as that of sinful individuals. Azad's treatment of human sins with a tender touch speaks of his own religious perceptions<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad's religious perspective cannot be drawn only from his justly famous commentary on the opening verses of the Quran (*Surat-al-Fatiha*). Here we meet Azad as a scholar of deep learning and fine religious sensibility, fully conversant with traditional thinking as well as alive to the spirit of modern thought, and deeply sensitive to the shades of meaning and subtle nuances of the Arabic language. But any exclusive reliance on his exegesis of the Quran will not give a balanced and faithful picture of Azad's multi-sided personality. Aesthetic experiences and religious consciousness have often blended in the mind of Azad in such a way as to invest him with a unique temperament. Hence no less important than his commentary, for a true understanding of Azad, are the charming letters which he wrote to his friend while he was confined at Ahmednagar and which are mostly concerned with his seemingly extra-religious occupation in the four walls of the British prison. It may be safely said that his interest in birds and flowers speaks as much of the spirit of Islam as his silent and stoic suffering on receiving the news of his wife's deteriorating condition and her final end. But even more significant is the last of the letters included in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, which shows the man in a different light and gives us a new insight into the multi-faceted Islamic sensitivity as represented by one of Islam's foremost spokesmen.

Earlier in his *Tazkirah* while describing, sometimes vividly, and sometimes only through hints, his early frustration in love which he, unfortunately, also called a "lapse", he admits that it was the grace of God which made its appearance in the form of profane love. It is worthwhile to quote him.

No doubt this (love of mine) was also a lapse. But what shall we say of a lapse that casts us on the feet of the Beloved? The end of all effort is to reach Him. If lapses and intoxication lead us there, why should not a thousand forms of constancy and sobriety be offered up on their altar? (p 145)<sup>3</sup>

Further, he rightly points out that what is common between earthly love and sacred love is exclusive attachment to the one and detachment from everyone else. In the tragic end we find victory and fulfilment

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed Mujeeb, "The Tadhkirah: A Biography in Symbols," *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume*, Asia Publishing House, 1959, edited by Humayun Kabir

Now, from the capacity to abandon oneself to love, there is not much distance to the appreciation of beauty in its varied forms. All great Sufi poets have sung of the collapse of theological piety in face of true love and celebrated it as a call to divine love. We see how beauty in all its varied forms fascinated Azad. He writes

Beauty, be it in sound or face, be it in Taj Mahal or Nishat Bagh, remains beauty. Beauty has its own natural requirement. Woe to that miserable wretched soul whose sensitive heart could not respond to it. (*Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 57)

He emphatically denounces the prevailing view that the fine arts are not compatible with the temperament of Islam. Music, he says, has no juristic prohibition. Its prohibition is due to the extreme steps which the jurists have taken to prevent its abuse. The Quran is clear when it invokes our attention to look to decorations at every place of worship (Quran 7:31).

One cannot help adding that the jurists have misunderstood the nature of art, especially music, and have considered it as a form of *Lahw* and *La'ab* (frivolous pastime) which the Quran condemns. On the contrary, as the German philosopher Schopenhauer has clearly seen, the function of true music is not to excite lust or provoke passion, but to liberate us from the tumult of the will, to live in will-less contemplation.

Maulana Azad's understanding of the Quran and the thrust of his religious ideas could not be appreciated by his Muslim contemporaries as they were too obsessed with political concerns. With the emergence of extremist views in countries where Muslims wield power, Islam is understood in terms of an ideology which must remain in confrontation with rival secular philosophies. The kind of universal Humanism which Maulana Azad tried to develop but could not complete, will be fully appreciated with the passage of time as the only viable alternative to extremist exclusiveness.

# Educationist and Humanist

*Kapila Vatsyayan*

Perhaps it was at the Congress session of 1937 that I saw on the dais a stately, impressive figure with a commanding dignity. In succeeding Congress sessions, as volunteers, we watched a galaxy of leaders delivering impassioned speeches, calling upon us to be equal partners in the struggle for freedom. We youngsters did not fully know what this freedom stood for other than a clear commitment for the removal of a foreign regime. As students, either in the vanguard or rearguard of processions, we shared the fervour, but with inadequate comprehension. By the time of the 1942 Movement, we had a somewhat keener awareness of what bondage stood for and what freedom aspired for. Gradually, almost imperceptibly our hero-worship of leaders grew into an intellectual and a critical understanding of the socio-economic, educational and cultural aspects of bondage. By 1947, the reality became poignant as we saw the division of community from community and religion from religion. We saw riots, we lent a hand in the rehabilitation of refugees. As observers and as participants in a smaller or greater measure, we came to realize that freedom was not merely from an external foreign master, but freedom was from the continuing, ever-present challenge of creating harmony and balance within. No books, no poetry, no speeches could bring this home to us more intensely than the last prayer meeting of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948.

The enthusiasm, the inspiration, the hope and the desire for building a new India were all there, but equally present were the pain and the anguish, the horror and the sorrow of a family divided and the Father of the Nation communicating his despair in words of childlike simplicity and age-old wisdom.

These emotion-charged experiences influenced many young people's ideas of their own future career. To many who grew up then, the personal future could not be separated from a deeper national commitment. They identified themselves with the tasks of the personalities who took over national responsibilities.



When Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was appointed the first Minister of Education of Independent India, he was for us a symbol of freedom from bondage, not only at the political level but even more so in the socio-cultural and educational dimensions

Little wonder that he mobilized around him not career administrators but a handful of committed educationists who shared his vision and who were committed to making education an instrument of the transformation of the Indian socio-cultural reality

There were two fundamental points on which Maulana Azad would make no compromises. The first was the unity of India and the other the education of the people. Maulana was a humanist first and last. His phenomenal scholarship, his extensive erudition and his mastery of theological issues did not blunt his sensibilities as a poet and a connoisseur. Literature, poetry and music were closest to his heart. In jail and elsewhere he could sing out the verses

No one tells me where my journey will end. I have traversed wilderness after wilderness, and there are yet more wildernesses to be crossed. In this garden, where spring and autumn are wrapped together in an eternal embrace, Time has a wine-cup in its hand and a death's head on its brow.

The silence of his inner poetic sensibility would be broken through couplets which flowed with the same ease as his passionate speeches at Congress meetings. As a man, Maulana was deeply immersed in the philosophic thought and literature of West Asia and the cross-cultural movements that took place throughout the centuries, interlinking India with cultures adjacent and remote. All these qualities were combined into one personality in this first Education Minister of free India. For him education was an instrument of social transformation. As Education Minister, it was his prime responsibility to concretize an educational policy of Independent India and initiate plans and programmes. He set out to do this with great energy and a grasp of the constraints of the structures which had already come to be and which could not be demolished even though political freedom had been won.

The appointment of the Universities Education Commission and the Secondary Education Commission of 1952, the establishment of the University Grants Commission, the reorganization of the All-India Council for Technical Education, the establishment of a chain of laboratories for scientific research, the development of the Indian Institutes of Technology, the establishment of the National Archives of India, the three Akademis and the National Museum, and the nationalization of the Salar Jung Museum and the Indian Museum, all these were due to the initiatives taken by Maulana.

Basic Education was close to his heart. He drew upon the experiments

of Dr. Zakir Husain, and called upon Professor K G Saiyidain and others to draw up a new system. However, both within Government and Parliament, he was acutely aware of the fact that Basic Education would not be viable and effective outside the context of the socio-economic programme of Mahatma Gandhi. His despair on this account was very visible. Time was short and the spheres in which educational programmes had to be launched were many. In each meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, Maulana drew attention to the need for paying the utmost attention to primary and elementary education. However, this was not to be at the cost of the urgent need for vocational education and adult education.

Another field on which Maulana left his mark was cultural relations with foreign countries. It was at his personal initiative that the International Cultural Relations Cell was established. He was the founder of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

At a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1958 he said :

When I assumed charge of Education in 1947, I immediately saw that there could be no solution of our educational problems without the fullest co-operation of the Centre and the Provinces. Education was, no doubt, a state subject, but it was my considered opinion that this distinction could be maintained only when our educational targets had been achieved. Till such time, the Central Government should openly recognize that though education is a state subject, it must share this responsibility with the state governments in order to meet the challenge of the times.

Looking back on his achievements during his ten years in office, he remarked in the same address

The progress which has been achieved in spite of these difficulties can be measured by the fact that when I assumed charge, the Central budget for Education was only about Rs 2 crores and is today considerably more than Rs 30 crores. It is not only the financial allocation which has been increased, but there has been expansion in all types of activities.

Despite all these achievements, he was aware of the difficulties and often spoke of his inability, almost helplessness, to find more money. In reply to the debate on his Ministry's Demand for Grants, he said in 1952

The question is whether this knot, which has come in the way of Education, and which is being lamented for the last five years, can be cut by complaints of this nature. My budget speech last year was not just a speech, it was an expression of

my mental agony which thus found an outlet I have stated in detail how the Government decided to go ahead in all directions in the educational field during the last five years, and how they had to stop for sheer helplessness

He continued

With a full sense of responsibility I have been telling you and do so again that there is no aspect of the educational problem in the country which the government has not considered and on which they have not made plans. Today, you have mentioned only a few matters connected with the educational problem. Four years have already rolled by since the government not only considered these matters but also finalized their policy in regard to all these fundamental and important matters. They appointed committees on almost every subject, considered the recommendations of these committees and finalized plans of work. There is hardly any branch of education, such as basic education, adult education, technical education, university education, physical education, which has been ignored and for which a finalized scheme is not ready now. But when all the schemes were ready and the Education Ministry took final decisions to implement them, we came to know that the road was blocked and that we could not take even a single step in that direction. Why is the road blocked? The reason is that we require money to get every scheme implemented and unfortunately we have not got sufficient money. If we cannot provide money for this purpose it is obvious that we cannot do anything practical, no matter how many schemes we may work out on paper. Will any Hon. Member out of five hundred Members of this House be pleased to suggest to me how to remove this impediment?

Day before yesterday complaints were voiced that various measures relating to education had not been taken. I assure you that there is no measure which Government has not fully considered and regarding which a complete blueprint has not been drawn up. If you can arrange for money today, I can assure you, Government would start the work tomorrow, for the consideration stage is already over. It is not the mind which is empty, but the pocket. You need not try to infuse intelligence or wisdom into the Government's mind. So far it has not felt any lack of it. What is lacking is money, which you should try to make available, if you can.

For Maulana Sahib, at no time could the system of education be dissociated from the socio-economic life of the country. At the very first

meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education under his chairmanship, he reminded us: "Our system of education must not be formed in isolation from our social and economic life of tomorrow. Different sides of our life and activities must be correlated. The primary aim of any system is to create balanced minds which cannot be misled. We must be strong mentally before we can think of building a nation."

The restructuring of secondary education was (and is still) difficult. But Maulana gave it concentrated attention. But for him there may not have been a Central Board of Secondary Education. Of greater significance are the bold initiatives taken by Maulana in the matter of technical education and the establishment of the Council of Technical Education. It was through this modality that the higher technical institutes were established which form the bedrock of the development of technical education in the country.

Maulana undertook the unenviable and challenging task of introducing four Bills in Parliament relating to the Central Universities. As young officers writing notes on these Bills and listening to the debates in Parliament, we realized that the Universities of Visva-Bharati, Benaras, Aligarh and Delhi aroused deep emotions. But Maulana's commitments were unshakeable. He was a true follower of Gandhiji in his convictions and tenacity. Responding to some scathing criticisms on the Visva-Bharati Bill in 1951, he said,

The object of the Bill is to preserve and promote the ideals for which that great institution was established. Further, I had then referred to what had transpired between me and Mahatma Gandhi in January 1947, at the time I took charge of this Ministry. He had told me that Gurudev had left a great trust with him which he was going to entrust to me thereafter. The Government of India, by introducing this Bill, has tried to preserve that trust.

Although Dr. S.P. Mukerjee and Maulana Azad differed on many fundamental matters, in this matter of preserving the intrinsic character of Visva-Bharati, Maulana Azad accepted all amendments suggested by Dr. Mukerjee and Dr. C.D. Deshmukh.

His ideas of what institutions of higher education should be, come through in these scintillating words:

An institution does not need any building. Nature provides us with the canopy of the sky and the open spaces where the spirit will flourish. Brick and stone do not make institutions.

The debate on the four Bills showed Maulana's catholic attitude, his tolerance and his total commitment to the education system of a secular government. He asserts that although the character of these institutions

could not be changed, religious instruction could not be made compulsory. The debate on the Aligarh University Bill was long and stormy. It brought up many matters which went into the fundamentals of religion, culture and education. Maulana was clear that the universities as they had been established should continue. He insisted on the retention of the words Benaras *Hindu* University and Aligarh *Muslim* University. At the same time he asserted, all through the debates, that the curricula should be international, encompassing all civilizations and cultures.

With his deep interest in the national heritage, Maulana Azad took a keen initiative in the reorganization of the Archaeological Survey of India and the establishment of the National Museum, the National Archives of India and the Historical Records Commission. I vividly recall an incident, which to me was a great learning experience. Maulana wanted an All-India Council of Museums to be established. Museums, as they were at that time, were omnibus institutions taking art, geology and botany in their sweep. A few were established by the British and there were a handful of private museums. The first meeting of the All India Advisory Council of Museums was held in a room in the Ministry of Defence where tribunals had held meetings and freedom fighters had given evidence. Maulana gave a speech in Urdu which was full of gravity, wit and humour. He punned on the word *ajayb ghar*, held forth on what constituted heritage, and then went into the riches of Asia and outflow of art objects to the British Museum. The speech by its contents and the manner of its delivery stirred all of us greatly. Maulana had given a call for another type of freedom—the freedom to know and recognize your intellectual past and to come to terms with it. Two great scholars, Rai Krishnadasa and Moti Chandra, who sat and listened to the speech, could not help going up to Maulana to acknowledge the depth and perceptiveness of the speech. It was his perseverance which enabled the Ministry of Education to have an administrative set-up specially for museums.

Archives and historical records were naturally very dear to his heart. He knew his material, knew his texts, could pinpoint the primary sources and could give instructions to the heads of archives and others to keep the records of the country in order. One could only know this aspect of his character if one had worked with him. The poet in him expressed himself in many ways, not in the least when it came to preserving monuments like the Taj Mahal or declaring others as monuments of national importance. The revision of the 1904 Act was at his initiative.

For all his refinement, Maulana was a hard taskmaster, wanting immediate action. He was particular on the prompt writing of minutes of meetings.

One of the first accomplishments of Maulana Azad as Education Minister was to set up chairs of Indian studies in West Asia. This included a chair of Sanskrit in Iran, Iraq and what was then Egypt. It

was at his initiative that Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam* and other works of Sanskrit were translated in Arabic for free distribution to libraries and cultural institutions in West Asia. In many meetings he referred to the closeness of Avesta and Sanskrit and the need for Indians to know Pahlavi. A programme of receiving books from these countries and sending books to them was initiated.

Cultural ties with South-East Asia also attracted his attention. He was particularly interested in Indonesia and its heritage and the common ties among Indonesia, Malaysia and India. Long before the Unesco General Conference in 1956, he had already established an Indian network of educational and cultural exchange. The founding of the ICCR should be viewed in this larger context, of Maulana Azad's vision of fostering ties between India and other cultures at a non-political level. It is perhaps pertinent to recall at this moment that Maulana Azad was very clear in his mind that the dialogue of culture and education must not be conditioned by the exigencies of foreign policy, and it was at his instance that the cultural exchange programmes between India and other parts of the world remained in the administrative charge of the Ministry of Education and Culture and not External Affairs.

As a savant he was anxious to ensure that the India Office Library was returned to India. Reluctant though he was to take trips abroad, he undertook a visit to London to discuss the return of that library with the British Government. He said that in the eyes of historical equity, the contents of that library belonged to India and should be returned to India. However, in the interest of the dissemination of knowledge, copies should be given to British libraries as also to libraries elsewhere. The Government of the United Kingdom raised many legal issues and mooted the proposal of the division of this library between India and Pakistan, and, later, brought up the question of the Mandalay papers of Burma. Maulana wanted the library back. It should have been returned to India on the eve of Independence. Although Maulana had accepted the division of India with pain and defeat, he would not accept the division of this library into fragments. A library, he told us, was a totality, like a person. At no time could a library be dismembered because it would be like dismembering the personality of a human being.

The poet in Maulana, the writer in Jawaharlal Nehru and the philosopher in Radhakrishnan were the motivating forces behind the establishment of the three Akademis. Never before, perhaps, and never after has there been such a symbiosis of vision, power and creativity in recent history. These giant thinkers and men of letters sat in seats of power to create institutions which could foster the imagination and which would not be shackled by the silken threads of the centres of power over which they themselves presided. Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru were the strongest exponents of giving freedom and autonomy to the Akademis.



I recall that Maulana Azad was even reluctant to get the Akademis registered in a hurry as autonomous bodies. Each time this matter was brought up before him, he would wave his beautiful, long, tapering index finger, and say, "No hurry, poets, writers, philosophers will meet, they will discuss, they will reflect and they will find ways and means of governing themselves. Why are you in such a hurry to put them all into one solid framework?" One realizes the wisdom of these words when one looks at the history of the creation of inappropriate structures to foster and regulate creativity.

Maulana Azad was an ardent champion of languages. While his mastery of Arabic and Urdu is known, few are aware of Maulana's strong support for programmes of Sanskrit study and the impetus he gave to several institutions for the propagation of Hindi. Some might recall the parliamentary combats between Purushottam Das Tandon and Seth Govind Das on the one side, and Maulana on the other. Each time Maulana stood his ground firmly. It was Maulana Azad who took the greatest interest in launching the scheme of the Sanskrit dictionary based on historical principles. It was also Maulana Azad who repeatedly drew attention to the need for strengthening the study of classical languages. He was opposed to the domination of any one language over another.

In his dedication to Hindustani, he was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. For him the language of national integration was Hindustani. If one saw any intolerance in him, it was when officers of the Government of India could not communicate with him in any Indian language. It was not uncommon for the Maulana to interrupt meetings, if participants or officers began to speak in high-flown English. He understood the language well, but with a naughty glint in his eyes he would turn around to Saiyidain or Ashfaq Hussain and ask, "What is that gentleman or lady saying?" Those returned from Cambridge or Oxford were promptly put in their place. That was Maulana, the Hindustani first and last.

He was greatly pained by the insinuations hurled at him. In one debate he burst out

I want to tell you that you should not expect me to talk in a tone of flattery. Only that one indulges in flattery who has an axe to grind and who wants that everybody should be pleased with him and that he should not lose the office of a Minister. I have no self-interest. Forty years ago, when nobody had even heard of my friends sitting around here, I decided to dedicate my life to the service of the country. I am talking of 1907, when I was eighteen or nineteen years of age and joined the Revolutionary Party of Bengal. Since then my whole life has been an open book before the world. There is no desire left in me now. The larger part of my life is over. Whatever little remains will also



end one day I have no desire and no ambition now. I may tell you that when a man has no personal motive left in him, he becomes boundless, shoreless I mean that such a man is immune from worldly setbacks. Such a man is unassailable by weapons, because the body is assailable so long as there is self-interest in a man. Once this weakness for the self disappears nothing can harm or injure a man. I may tell you frankly that for the misfortune that befell this country as a result of the two-nation theory and the establishment of Pakistan, this sort of mentality, this sort of attitude, has been as much responsible as the misguided Muslims and the Muslim League.

Hindustani, sure, but equally international, Maulana Azad was familiar with the age-old cultural dialogue between India, West Asia and the East. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he wanted the winds of all cultures to blow through India but without uprooting it.

# The Authors

Mahatma Gandhi	1869-1948	Father of the Indian Nation
Jawaharlal Nehru	1889-1964	First Prime Minister of India
Rajendra Prasad	1884-1963	First President of India
S Radhakrishnan	1888-1975	Second President of India
Zakir Husain	1897-1969	Third President of India
Indira Gandhi	1917-1984	Third Prime Minister of India
Jayaprakash Narayan	1902-1979	Freedom fighter and social reformer
Mohd Hassan el Zayyat		Egyptian diplomat and writer
Salim Ali	1896-1987	Ornithologist, Member of Rajya Sabha
M Chalapathi Rau	1909-1983	Journalist, editor of <i>National Herald</i> , New Delhi
Acharya J B Kripalani	1888-1982	Freedom fighter and statesman
Shorish Kashmiri	1914-1975	Journalist, editor of <i>Chattan</i> , Lahore
Syed Mahmud	1889-1971	Member of Lok Sabha, Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs
K G Saiyidain	1903-1971	Secretary, Ministry of Education, scholar and writer.
Syed Abid Husain	1896-1978	Professor of Philosophy, Jamia Millia Islamia University, scholar and writer
Mohammad Mujeeb	1902-1985	Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia University, historian, scholar and writer.
Aruna Asaf Ali		Freedom fighter and social worker.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay	1903-1988	Vice-President, World Crafts Council and Indian Council for Cultural Relations, freedom fighter and social worker
Ansar Harvani		Former Member of Parliament and freedom fighter.
Krishna Kripalani		Secretary of Maulana Azad, former Member of Rajya Sabha, former Chairman, National Book Trust, writer and biographer.
Mohammad Yunus		Freedom fighter, former diplomat and administrator, Member of Rajya Sabha, author.
S.M.H Burney		Former Governor, administrator, Chairman, Minorities Commission, scholar and writer
Mushirul Haq	1933-1990	Vice-Chancellor, Kashmir University, Professor of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, scholar and writer
Kazi Javed		Department of Philosophy, University of Punjab, author and freelance writer
Prem Kripal		Former Education Secretary, Ministry of Education, Chairman, Executive Board of Unesco, Paris
A.S Malhabadi		Journalist, editor, <i>Azad Hind</i> , Calcutta
B.N Pande		Former Governor of Orissa, Scholar of Islamic history and culture, author of several books
A Rahman		Founder and former Director, National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies.
Malik Ram		Editor, <i>Collected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad</i> , published by Sahitya Akademi,

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